

THE LOST RING
AND OTHER POEMS



CAROLINE A. MASON

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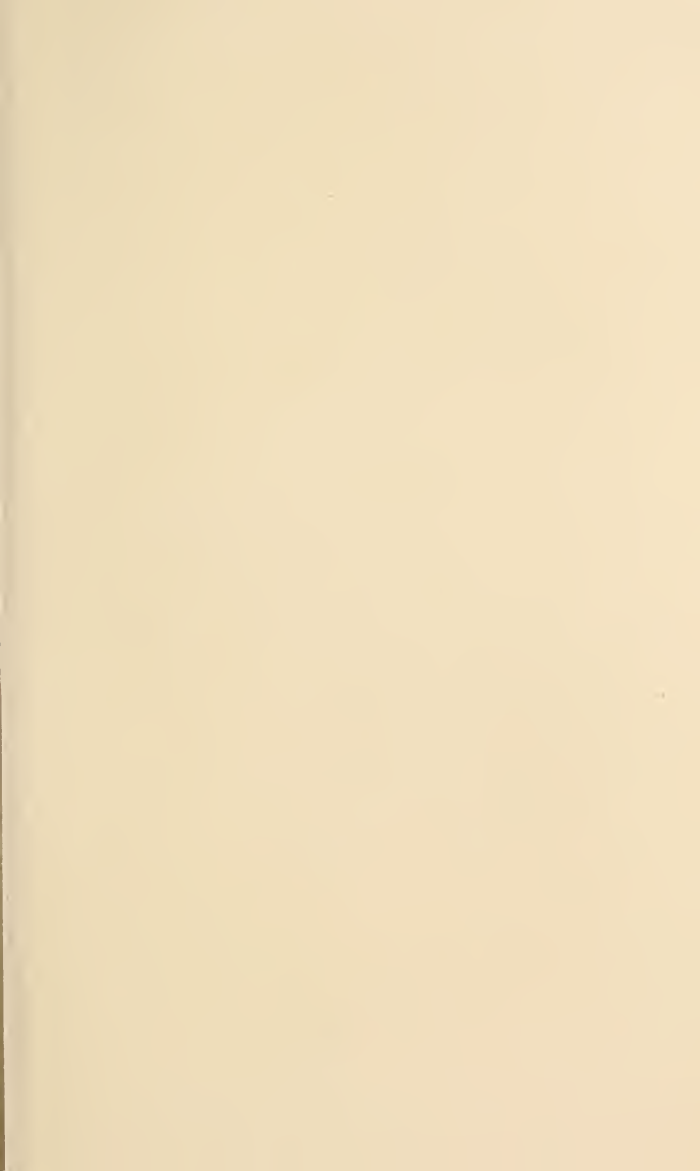
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Caroline A. Mason



THE LOST RING
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

CAROLINE A. MASON

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
CHARLES G. AMES*



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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INTRODUCTION

THIS little volume is primarily a monument to the gifts and character of a woman whose membership in the guild of American authors has long been recognized. It contains over one hundred poems, selected from a much larger number, whose production extended over nearly a half century of her quiet life. The aim of the compilation has been to illustrate the scope of her mind, heart, and poetic genius, — to show the depth, breadth, and quality of her interest in nature, humanity, and the divine order of the world. Her lively artistic sense was exalted by rare spirituality; her apt literary faculty was ever the servant of insight and experience; her minstrelsy was but the voicing of her aspiration and her love for the true, the beautiful, and the good.

So far as the material permitted, the order of arrangement has been logical rather than chronological, that the wide variety of subjects and treatment might yet yield a certain unity of impression, suggestive of the simplicity and con-

sistency of the character here imperfectly reflected. For the life of Mrs. Mason was the noblest of her poems.

Seventy-two pieces, samples of her earlier work, published in 1852, in a volume entitled "Utterance," though well received, were not uniformly equal in sentiment, substance, or execution to her maturer productions; and but few of the former are here included, though some of them have become popular favorites. "Do They Miss Me at Home?" has been sung by thousands of English-speaking people who never knew the author's name. With the deepening of her own life her fingers instinctively sought the strings of the "sacred harp," and several of her devout utterances have been incorporated into modern hymnology. But the timbrel served for lighter moods. And if, amid the storm and stress of war, it was not a woman's part to sound the trumpet, it will yet be seen that her whole soul responded, in the name of Liberty and Union, to the nation's passionate struggle for life. It has been said that she had "a rare gift for meeting occasions;" and her latest Fitchburg pastor, the Rev. W. H. Pierson, thus testifies: "She was our local sibyl and seer, and when a word of comfort, hope, or gratulation needed to be spoken for some occasional or passing event, her townspeople resorted to her as to an oracle, and were not disappointed."

Caroline Atherton (Briggs) Mason was born in Marblehead, July 27, 1823. Her father was Dr. Calvin Briggs, a graduate of Williams College, and an eminent physician and citizen. Her mother, Rebecca (Monroe) Briggs, a woman of strong, decided character, was the daughter of Dr. Ephraim and Mercy (Atherton) Monroe. Dr. Monroe, born and educated in Scotland, was a surgeon in the military service. Her paternal grandfather, the Rev. James Briggs, was a graduate of Yale College, and for forty-five years the minister of Cummington, where he lived to the age of eighty; and of him William Cullen Bryant, in youth his parishioner, wrote the poem, "The Old Man's Funeral."

Mrs. Mason was the youngest of seven sisters, all of whom received their advanced education at Bradford Academy, where they used sometimes to be spoken of as "the Pleiades." Harriet, older by but twenty months than Caroline, and endeared to her by near and constant companionship, became the wife of David T. Stoddard, and accompanied him to a mission field among the Nestorians, where, after five years of devoted service, she died of cholera at Trebizond, and was buried on the shores of the Black Sea. The heart-cry of her sister in America is heard in the poems entitled "Aroma" and "The Grave by the Euxine."

Soon after the death of Dr. Briggs, in 1852, the family removed to Fitchburg, where, in August, 1853, Caroline was married to Charles Mason, a lawyer of that place, who, after a union of thirty-seven years, survives her, with their one son, a physician in his native town. Laurel Hill, their residence, is a beautiful and retired location, yet near the city and overlooking its densely peopled valley. She died June 13, 1890.

She retained unimpaired through life the reverence for sacred things in which she had been educated under the old-time theology of New England; but with maturing freedom and enlargement of mind and heart she grew into a sunnier faith and a larger hope; her whole nature yielded to the demand for a universe of harmony; her being expanded in the consciousness of the constant presence and care of the all-wise, all-loving Father, and in the light of the perfect humanity illustrated in the spirit and life of Jesus of Nazareth, — an expansion which not only made intolerance impossible, but drew her into ready sympathy with the devout and faithful of every name.

CHARLES G. AMES.

June, 1891.

TO THE POETS

*Reapers in God's great field of Truth,
I would come after, like gentle Ruth, —*

*Gleaning of that ye have left behind ;
Happy my simple wealth to bind.*

*If ye should reckon me overbold,
Standing amid your sheaves of gold,*

*Do but hearken the Master's call, —
“ See, my reapers, that ye let fall,*

*“ Out of the plenty in my land,
Here and there for the gleaner's hand.”*

*So I follow where ye have trod,
Reapers who reap the fields of God.*

THE LOST RING

“THE blooms of May! the blooms of May!
The apple-orchards bright and gay!
The springing grass, the charmèd air!
O Earth, but thou art in thy prime,
And I am old before my time,
And faded; thou art young and fair.”

Thus moaned my friend to me one day,
Or to herself, — I cannot say.

We stood beside the orchard wall:
A look of care was on her face,
But, save that sign, I could not trace
Time's touch, nor wherefore she let fall

Such mournful words. “It is not so,”
I cried; “this witless speech forego!
'T is you are young; the earth is not, —
The poor old Mother! What you see
Of bloom and beauty is not she:
Her years are manifold, I wot.

“Her offspring these, — this grass we tread,
These bloomy sweets above our head;

“And death, — that, too, in his own time,
 Is good, for by it we do climb
 To fuller life; but, to forestall
 His providence and court the fate
 His higher wisdom bids us wait,
 ’T were better not to have lived at all !”

Thus with stern love that did not dare
 To shield her fault, or weakly spare
 Her weakness, — thus I answered her.
 She stood with downcast eyes a space,
 Then raised to mine her tear-wet face,
 With all its passionate blood astir.

“Yes, I will tell you! You shall know
 The secret grief that stabs me so :
 It may be you will wonder less
 At those wild, wicked words I spoke ;
 For, darling, when the heart is broke
 Who heeds its ravings of distress ?

“For I *did* rave : it would be hard,
 I know, to lie beneath the sward,
 And I so young in years. Ah, well,
 The world is very fair to see, —
 Or was ; — but turn your eyes from me,
 And listen to what once befell.

“The blooms of May! the blooms of May!
 One long, long year ago to-day,

I stood beneath this very tree :
My woman's fate was in my hand ;
Awhile the fluttering thing I scanned,
Then lightly let it go from me.

“ What trifles vex a maiden's mood,
And stir the currents of her blood
To wild revolt and wilful ends !
A vain caprice ungratified,
A whim defeated or defied, —
And strangers part, who met as friends.

“ I cannot tell if it were pride
Or pique, or aught to each allied,
But I was young and foolish both.
He came, for he had seen me pass ;
I heard his footstep in the grass,
And all my heart was in my mouth !

“ Sweet bird-notes rang from all the trees :
I heard a sweeter tune than these
In every step as on he came ;
Soft-murmuring bees flew in and out
The honeyed apple-blooms about :
A softer murmur fell, — my name.

“ But ah, methought he did not woo
As lovers should, as lovers do, —
With sugared speech and flattering air ;
He never once had whispered me

That I was fair, — oh, vanity! —
Nor praised my lips nor praised my hair.

“And yet I knew — But why essay
With loitering words my tale to stay?
Had he not loved me long and well?
Fool! royal plenty at my side,
Yet choosing husks, and satisfied
To drop the sweetness for the shell!

“As near he drew, a bee, half strayed
In its bewildered circuit, made
An instant's lodgment on my face:
He bent and brushed it from my cheek, —
Fair chance some courtly praise to speak,
(I thought,) if one had but the grace!

“Comparisons are quick to come
To lovers' lips, but his are dumb.
The dolt! no image to descry,
Nor say, ‘Your cheek so like the rose,
What wonder that the poor bee knows
No better? Who can blame? Not I!’

“Instead, ‘The blundering thing!’ he cried.
‘It has not stung you?’ I replied,
‘And if it had, why make ado?’
‘Because,’ he answered, ‘it were much
To shield you from each harmful touch,
And I am hurt with what hurts you.’

“ Love’s own response, — so good, so kind !
But I was deaf, but I was blind.

He stood one moment pondering,
Then, without further sign or look,
Deftly from off his finger took
A little shining, golden ring.

“ ‘It was my mother’s : when she died,
She bade me keep it — for my bride ;
Her gift, she said ’ (his words came slow).

‘ O Mabel, may she give it you ?
I love you well, I love you true ;
You ’ll wear it, darling ? Tell me so.’

“ What ailed me ? With a cruel scorn,
A sudden madness, passion-born,
I dashed his pleading hand aside.

‘ I do not love, I cannot wed,
And so I will not mock the dead
With wearing of her ring ! ’ I cried.

“ And as I purposed, — had he seen ? —
The ring slid down among the green,
Which shrank, as loath such spoil to take ;
And while I looked, each grassy blade
Assumed a dagger’s point and made
Mute thrusts at me, or seemed to make.

“ O sacrilege ! — but I was torn
With jealous fears : could I have borne

To see another wear the ring ?
No ; lost to me, there let it lie,
Though every careless passer-by
Smote with rude heel the hallowed thing !

“ But rallying, ‘ Alas for man’s
Forecasting ! Fate forbids the banns,
And, certes, she is right,’ I said :
‘ Go, sir ! who weds with me, I wis,
Must woo in other guise than this :
I like not dealings with the dead !’

“ He answered not ; he held my gaze
One moment with his own, — amaze,
Scorn, pity, anguish in his look ;
Then turning, left me to the fate
Which I had dared, — so desolate,
To think on it I could not brook !

“ And ever since that fateful morn
Which banned me with his pitying scorn,
Life has been little worth to me ; —
If that *be* life, whose every breath
Is but a whispered prayer for death,
Careless how soon the end may be.”

She bent to meet my mute caress :
“ Heaven send you sweet forgetfulness,”
I murmured. “ That were doubtful gain,”
She cried ; “ but would, oh brave heart lost !

Would thou couldst know the bitter cost,
And all my grief, remorse, and pain !”

A footstep on the other side,
Just where the skirting bushes hide
The orchard wall ! A moment more,
And, clearing at a bound the space,
He stands with Mabel face to face, —
The lover whom her thoughts deplore !

And what remains to tell ? I turned
And left them. When the sunset burned
In the sweet west, we saw them pass :
I looked, a ring was on her hand,
The same — but you will understand : —
It was not lost beneath the grass !

THE SAILING OF THE SHIP

We stood and watched it from the shore ; —
How shapely 't was ! how proud and fair !
But what from her of hope it bore,
And what it left me of despair,
To think on it I do not dare.

I spoke : “ Some lover’s signal — see !
He hails you from the ship, Lisette.”
Her proud lip curled. “ 'T is naught to me,”
She said, and gayly smiled — and yet,
Beshrew me, but her eyes were wet !

And if I gazed on her with aught
Of Love's concern beneath a mien
Too careless for her afterthought,
My reasons were my own, I ween ;
What need by her to be foreseen ?

Oh, sweet Lisette ! and proud as sweet !
What hindered that she should not take
Her heart and show it me ? — but fleet
The ship sped on, and in its wake,
What hopes lay drowning for her sake !

For oh, I loved her ! I had thought
That very morn to tell her so ;
But Love, with doubt already fraught,
Grows to Despair as doubts do grow ; —
And did she love him ? — yes or no ?

The wind blew roughly out to sea ;
I felt her shiver as we stood ;
“ Only soft airs should circle thee ! ”
I cried, and made as though I would
Have drawn her landward an I could.

She shrank away : “ I like it best,
This fierce north breeze ; I do not care
For sunny south wind or for west,
And I can bear what others bear, ” —
She said, and smoothed her sea-blown hair.

I saw — in spite of her — I saw
Her heart had gone with that great ship !
Fierce blew the north wind, fierce and raw,
I looked to see her roses slip,
Congealed, away from cheek and lip ; —

They freshened with the fresh'ning breeze ;
I left her standing by the sea.
But life is made of things like these ; —
And Life and Death are one to me,
Since that great ship went out to sea !

DERNIER RESSORT

“WHEN the winter woos the summer, when No-
vember mates with May,
When my dimples match your wrinkles, my
brown hair your locks of gray,
Come to me again for answer : but my nay shall
still be nay.

“Pardon words that sound unseemly, — but you
will not understand
Softer speech.” She would have passed him,
but he stayed her with his hand ;
Plying still, with love's own blindness, all the
arts at love's command :

“Hear me! I have lands and titles; an with
me you cross the tide,
Wealth shall wait upon your bidding; not one
wish shall be denied:
None would know the peasant’s daughter in the
Baron’s haughty bride.”

“Peace!” she cried. “If I should wed you,
you would know me bought with gold:
Looking for all gentle passions, — wifely love
and trust, — behold,
Than my perjured heart, no marble more insen-
sate or more cold!

“I should pity like a woman; you would palter
like a man;
Both would rue the day, heaven-blighted, when
the wretched farce began:
And for me, I crave a *blessing* on my bridal,
not a *ban*.”

Pale she stood amid the gloaming; all the glory
of her eyes
Quenched in tears: but still he pleaded, — “she
was foolish, he was wise;
Love would come at love’s own bidding,” — till,
as deer to covert flies, —

Hard beset and spent, — she answered (Oh, her
shame was fair to see!),

“ Since no other word can touch you, listen,
then ; — I am not free !

Down in yonder mossy cottage beats a manly
heart for me.

“ Oh, his eyes are blue as heaven ! Oh, his locks
are like the sun !

And I love him ! though of houses, gold, or sil-
ver, he has none ;

I have promised I will wed him when the har-
vest work is done.”

Rosy stood she in the gloaming ; and a certain
queenly grace,

Born of maiden truth, and fairer than the
blushes on her face,

Sealed the “ No ” she gave for answer, proudly
turning from the place.

THE KING'S QUEST ¹

THE King rode fast, the King rode far ;

“ Now, by my crown,” quoth he,

“ If I in all the land shall find

A maiden of contented mind,

Be she of high or low degree,

By Pagan rite or Christian signed,

My consort she shall be.”

¹ Recently set to music in London, by an English com-
poser.

But when he chanced the maid to meet,
 So well content was she,
 She would not wed, but, deaf and blind,
 Went on her way. "Alack, I find
 I'm caught in my own web," quoth he ;
 "This maiden of contented mind
 Is too content for me !"

ST. VALENTINE

THE sleet was blowing : where was any sign
 Of greening valley, call of mating bird ?
 Yet, close beside my ear, a voice I heard —
 A whisper — "Sweet, choose now your valen-
 tine !"

"Nay, wait till skies are softer, airs more fine."
 But still, impetuous, fell that whispered word,
 "Choose, choose your valentine !"

What was it stirred,
 Like breath of June, this yielding heart of mine ?
 Sudden, the bleak earth blossomed into bowers
 Of bridal beauty : for its wreathing snows,
 Wide banks of creamy jessamine and rose, —
 While on the pane bloomed out great passion-
 flowers.

And I, — so subtle-sweet Love's whispers are ! —
 Be sure for choice I did not wander far.

LOVE

I DO not ask it thee ! That is not love
Which waits to be entreated. Love is free
As God's own life, and of itself doth move.
Should I say, Love me ? Rather let me prove
Myself to be love-worthy : then let be !

And yet what wretched shams our sad eyes
see ! —

“ I love my Love because my Love loves me ; ” —

Oh, pitiful ! Hast thou no gauge above
Another's thought by which to rate thine own ?
No worthier trust, no surer corner-stone
To build thy temple of sweet hopes upon ?

God help thee at thy need and give thee
strength

To bear the shock of trial when at length
Thine hour shall write thee desolate, undone.

Sitting in this sweet stillness all alone,

I thank my God that with my eyes upon

His holy stars, I can say reverently,

“ I love my Love because in him I see

Great nobleness, worthy of all my love,

A soul all meanness and all feints above ;

A manly front that dares to face the Right,

That, shouldering Truth, stands ready for the
 fight,
 And following Duty, walks in her sweet light."

O ye glad stars that overspread the night !
 I cannot see you for these happy tears,
 Yet know you shining still ; so Love appears :
 I cannot pierce these misty human years
 That hide God's great Hereafter, yet I know
 My love still shining there as here below,
 Only with purer, more ecstatic glow.
 For is not Love immortal ? Stars shall fall,
 And the weird music of the jostling spheres
 Crash into silence ! Love, supreme o'er all,
 Shall throb its calm, grand pæan undismayed,
 By nothing daunted and of nought afraid,
 Though old worlds crumble or though new be
 made.

TWO GOALS

[AT TWENTY]

To let my high ambitions spoil
 That should to noblest uses fit,
 To stand in shade and serve as foil
 To those who in the sunshine sit, —

I will not shape my destiny
 To such poor issues ! — should I grow

Downward, like roots, and thus defy
God's purpose, and requite Him so ?

And not aspire and not expand ? —
O Fame, how grand thou art, and sweet !
And may I sit at thy right hand
Or serve, rejoicing, at thy feet ?

[AT FIFTY]

I thank my God He did destroy
The dream that thrall'd my youthful soul
To give me more divine employ
And loftier aim and worthier goal ;

To show me how Fame's brightest dream
Grows dim beside a Purpose high ;
(Who heeds the rushlight's flickering beam
When God's great sun is in the sky ?)

To teach me what a narrow scope
Is his who looks for his award
To earthly praise, beneath the cope,
And not beyond, where dwells the Lord.

And though, when I am gone, scant dole
May fall to me of garnered fame,
If, here and there, some quickened soul
With tearful gladness name my name,

Saying, " I 'm worthier for some line,
Some word of hers," it shall suffice :

It shall be bread to me and wine
And cheer me even in Paradise !

WAKING

I HAVE done at length with dreaming ;
Henceforth, O thou soul of mine,
Thou must take up sword and buckler,
Waging warfare most divine.

Life is struggle, combat, victory !
Wherefore have I slumbered on
With my forces all unmarshalled,
With my weapons all undrawn ?

Oh, how many a glorious record
Had the angels of me kept
Had I done instead of doubted,
Had I warred instead of wept !

But begone, regret, bewailing !
Ye but weaken, like the rest ;
I have tried the trusty weapons
Rusting erst within my breast,

I have wakened to my duty,
To a knowledge large and deep
That I recked not of aforetime,
In my long, inglorious sleep.

In this subtle sense of being
Newly stirred in every vein,
I can feel a throb electric, —
Pleasure half allied to pain.

'T is so sweet and yet so awful,
So bewildering, yet brave,
To be king in every conflict
Where before I crouched a slave!

'T is so glorious to be conscious
Of a growing power within
Stronger than the rallying forces
Of a charged and marshalled sin!

Never in those old romances
Felt I half the thrill of life
That I feel within me stirring,
Standing in this place of strife.

Oh, those olden days of dalliance
When I wantoned with my fate!
When I trifled with a knowledge
That had well nigh come too late!

Yet, my soul, look not behind thee;
Thou hast work to do at last:
Let the brave deeds of the present
Overarch the crumbled past.

Build thy great aims high and higher ;
Build them on the conquered sod
Where thy weakness first fell bleeding,
And thy first prayer rose to God.

EN VOYAGE

WHICHEVER way the wind doth blow
Some heart is glad to have it so ;
Then blow it east or blow it west,
The wind that blows, that wind is best.

My little craft sails not alone ;
A thousand fleets from every zone
Are out upon a thousand seas ;
And what for me were favoring breeze
Might dash another, with the shock
Of doom, upon some hidden rock.
And so I do not dare to pray
For winds to waft me on my way,
But leave it to a Higher Will
To stay or speed me ; trusting still
That all is well, and sure that He
Who launched my bark will sail with me
Through storm and calm, and will not fail,
Whatever breezes may prevail,
To land me, every peril past,
Within His sheltering heaven at last.

Then, whatsoever wind doth blow,
My heart is glad to have it so ;
And blow it east or blow it west,
The wind that blows, that wind is best.

WE THREE

A QUIET reach of upland brown,
Green meadows stretching cool between ;
Below, the busy little town,
Half hidden in its nest of green.

Far off, an aged woodman, gray
With years, and bent with toil and care ;
His locks, uncovered to the day,
White-streaming on the summer air ;

And near, the fall of little feet,
The music of a child's glad voice,
A ringing gush of laughter sweet,
That makes the very hills rejoice !

O worn old man ! O laughing child !
I stand a link between ye two —
A quiet woman, thought-beguiled
One moment by the sight of you.

What I have been, what I shall be,
Is mirrored to me as I gaze ; —

My happy childhood's spring-time glee ;
 The coming of my winter days.

Stream, stream your white locks on the wind,
 And bide, old man, the weary end :
 I am not very far behind,
 And I shall reach you soon, old friend !

And chirp, glad child, your cheery glee !
 In heaven's rejuvenating clime
 We shall be mated yet, — we three, —
 In youth's serene, perpetual prime.

So it doth matter little now ;
 Though, to my mind, best off is he,
 The ripest on Life's fruited bough, —
 Best off and happiest of the three.

INFLUENCE

IDLING upon the pebbly beach,
 I cast a stone the blue waves o'er ;
 The widening circles mock my reach
 And tremble to the farthest shore !

An arrow on its silent course
 Cleaves the blue air with quivering speed ;
 And, drawn by stern attraction's force,
 The strong globe feels the noiseless deed.

Forbear, then, man! — The impious word
That poisons those poor lips of clay,
Through all the centuries shall be heard
And sound beyond the latest day.

Courage, faint soul! thine earnest thought
Shall yet attest its heavenly birth ;
Till, to a strong completeness wrought,
It moves and draws the solid earth.

NOT YET

Not yet! Along the purpling sky
We see the dawning ray ;
But leagues of cloudy distance lie
Between us and the day.

Not yet! The aloe waits serene
Its promised advent-hour, —
A patient century of green
To one full, perfect flower.

Not yet! No harvest song is sung
In the sweet ear of spring,
Nor hear we while the blade is young
The reaper's sickle swing.

Not yet! Before the crown, the cross ;
The struggle, ere the prize ;

Before the gain the fearful loss,
And death ere Paradise !

QUESTION AND ANSWER

I.

WHEN I consider all our scheming ways,
The unavailing care and skill man spends,
And ceaseless labor, reaching after ends
He fails in compassing; then, turning, gaze
On Nature, — see how through long, noiseless
days

And silent nights, her quiet way she wends,
Sure of the goal to which her purpose tends,
Since every force her own mute force obeys, —
My heart grows restive, questioning why we
Thus baffled are, while Nature has her will;
We, sentient, wise, — she, groping, blind, and
still.

The sphinx-like problem plagues me! Can it
be

That were we groping, blind, even as she,
Fate, of itself, would our designs fulfil?

II.

Then Reason answers me: "O heart, forego
Such graceless, vain deduction! Otherwhere
Solution lies. 'Man sows in toil and care,'
Thou sayest, 'reaping failure.' Is it so?"

Then must it be that what he fain would grow
Were, on the whole, not best, and would not
square
With God's designings. Nature does not
share
Our mutinies : she is at one, we know,
With Him who fashioned her. Willing,
though blind,
Obedient, though mute, she gropes her way
To surest issues. This, then, we may say,
That were we more at one with God's great
mind,
Life to our wishes would be oftener kind,
Nor human schemes so often go astray."

WHO CAN OUTWIT HIS FATE?

WHO can outwit his fate? There was a king
To whom the Oracle revealed a thing
Of solemn import : " Know," it said, " that thou,
Great king, to death's all potent spell shalt bow
In twelve short years." The monarch bent his
head
In reverent wise : " The gods know best," he
said :
But to himself he muttered, " Since 't is so,
I'll crowd the fleeting moments as they go
With twice their fill of pleasure ; and so pour
Into twelve years the bliss of twenty-four."

He got him servants ; got him gold and gear ;
 Loaded his groaning tables with good cheer ;
 Drank wine by flagons ; gave himself no rest
 Pursuing pleasures ; when one lost its zest,
 Turned to another ; changed night into day
 With grand illuminations ; left no way
 Unsought, untried, whereby to tax his powers
 Twofold, and conjure from the sated hours
 A double tribute.

Thus six years went by ;
 Then spoke his Fate : " How couldst thou hope
 to fly
 My fiat ? Who would cope with gods must be
 Himself immortal : bow to destiny !
 Thy twelve years are accomplished."

That same night
 The stricken king lay shrouded, cold, and white ;
 And they who robed him spoke whereof they
 knew :
 " Who flies his fate, but dares it to pursue ;
 And, score who may, the unerring gods count
 true ! "

DARK HOURS

OH, my tried soul, be patient ! Roughest rinds
 Fold over sweetest fruitage ; heaviest clouds
 Rain the most ample harvests on the fields ;
 The grass grows greenest where the wintry snows

Have fallen deepest, and the fairest flowers
Spring from old, dead decay. The darkest mine
Yields the most flashing jewels from its cell,
And stars are born of darkness, day of night.
Oh, my tried soul, be patient! Yet for thee
Goes on the secret alchemy of life;
God, the One-Giver, grants no boon to earth
That He withholds from thee; and from the dark
Of thy deep sorrow shall arise new light,
New strength to do and suffer, new resolves,
Perchance new gladnesses and freshest hopes!
Oh, there are times when I can no more weep
That I have suffered, for I know great strength
Is born of suffering; and I trust that still,
Wrapt in the dry husk of my outer life,
Lie warmer seeds than ever yet have burst
From its dull covering; stronger purposes
Stir consciously within, and make me great
With a new life — a life akin to God's —
Which I must nurture for the holy skies.
Help me! thou great All-Patient! for the flesh
Will sometimes falter, and the spirit fail;
Add to my human thy divinest strength,
When next I waver; rouse my faith as now,
That out of darkness I may see great light,
And follow where it ever leads — to thee!

OPTIMIST

A PERFECT God, he must have planned
A perfect scheme : his wisdom scanned
His embryo world ; his forming thought
Outran the centuries as He wrought.
He gauged it all, — each seeming flaw, —
The dreadful fact of sin ; the law
Of sad heredity, whereby
The innocent for the guilty die ;
Truth's birth-throes ; martyr-stings and pains ;
A dusky continent in chains.
He gauged it all : He saw that wrong
Would often win ; He knew the strong
Would hurt the weak, and honest worth
Become sweet food for knaves ; that dearth
Would blight the land, swift lightnings mar,
And great floods whelm it : schism and war
Keep bloody carnival above
His slaughtered laws of truth and love ;
That sickness with its legion brood —
Rheums, fevers, palsies, taints of blood —
Would plague the race. Ah, wherefore, then,
Project a world of suffering men ?
Why stayed He not his forming hand ?
Why issued He that dread command,
That awful fiat, " Let there be " ?
Oh, graceless, vain philosophy,
That seeks with finite grasp to span

The boundaries of infinite plan !
Enough for our imperfect thought
That perfect Love and Wisdom wrought ;
That not one atom of the whole
Stupendous scheme but has for goal
A gracious outcome, hidden, sealed
Perhaps, but sure to be revealed ;
That sin and suffering have their place
In God's economy of grace.
Ay, sin ! we know not why or how ;
But, since his wisdom could allow
This alien offshoot on the tree
Of healthy being, who are we
To hurl thereat our puny doubt,
And murmur, " It were best left out " ?
Nay, cavil ye who will or can :
" Let God be true and every man
A liar," — is there other creed
Can serve us at our direst need ?

Thus far our quest, if that be quest
Which ends where it began. At best,
We travel in a circle when
We scan God's wondrous ways with men.
Still, still we find his boundless love
The pivot on which all things move.
Still, focus and circumference
Are radiating centres whence
All good evolves, — and evil still
But the blind agent of his will.

All glory, then, to Him who knew
 Whereof he wrought. All glory, too,
 To that transmuting power which brings
 Such sweetness from such bitter things, —
 Good still from evil, bliss from bane ;
 From weakness, strength ; from losses, gain.
 All glory ! Let the stars outpour
 Their praiseful song as once before,
 When, at the first, creation stood
 Complete, and God pronounced it good.
 All glory ! Let the sons of God
 Still shout for joy, and tell abroad
 Their gladness from each heavenly hill,
 “ All, all is good ! ” proclaiming still.

CAGED

POOR prisoned bird, that sings and sings,
 Unconscious of the gift of wings ;
 Or, knowing it, content to be
 Shorn of its birthright liberty !

Like souls — a sadder thrall who bear,
 Or wittingly or unaware —
 Consenting to their prison bars,
 When, haply, they might pierce the stars.

Oh, I would rather be the clod
 That knows not, cannot know, of God,

Than thus, in sluggish wise, deny
My title to his open sky!

He gave us wings; He must have meant,
Thereby, a noble discontent
To teach us, that we might essay
To break each bond and soar away.

What is the cage which shuts us in,
But our own sloth? but our own sin?
All outward limitations are
But cobwebs to such bolt and bar.

For me, no idle lance I tilt
Against my lot: mine all the guilt;
I am my own most bitter foe —
Ah, this it is which irks me so!

If from myself I could set free
Myself! At odds I still must be
Till my victorious wings shall rise,
Unclogged, and sweep the farthest skies.

UNATTAINED

I.

OH, fair ideals of those far-off days,
When life was promise, — in what mournful
guise

They front us now ! We meant to be so wise,
So good, so great ! What eager, brave essays
To lift our lives above the common ways
And make them prodigal of all that lies
In noble, full achievement ! Still the prize
Receded ever, ever, and the praise
Rang hollow. Ah, how impotent appears
Human ambition, since, who most attains,
Misses the goal. From every height he gains,
Ever a loftier its crest uprears ;
While, still, the unattainable remains,
A baffling dream to vex his human years.

II.

Before a picture, fruit of his young skill,
Stood an old painter, lost in absent thought,
Till, as the saddening spell within him wrought,
“ Alas,” he cried, “ that Age cannot fulfil
What Youth did prophesy, that yet so ill
Performance waits on Promise ! ” He had
sought —

Ay, and had found it, — fame by genius bought
And high endeavor. Whispers which distil
That subtle, sweet elixir men call praise,
Had been his daily dole from bearded lip
And mouth of beauty : he had dared to sip
The siren draught. Was this the end, to gaze
On the bright promise of his youth, as yet
But half redeemed, and life’s sun nearly set ?

BLOSSOM AND FRUIT

“He who would write heroic poems must make his whole life a heroic poem.” — MILTON.

AND did we live the poems that we write,
What heroes, saints, a wondering world would
see!

And how, for every poet, there would be

A spirit clad in panoply of light, —

Courageous, calm, divining Truth at sight,

To follow her, come rout or victory!

And such there are whose lives and songs
agree:

Like tropic growths where flower and fruit
unite,

On the same bough, to sweeten all the air.

O, poets! let your fruited deeds be fair

As are your blossoming words; for, thus allied,

Each of the other shall be justified;

And he is greatest who does best rehearse

In his own life the greatness of his verse.

PERADVENTURE

THE lightning came with fierce and fiery breath

And swept a human soul to instant death.

But all the air, so fever-charged before,
After the storm grew sweet with health once
more.

And men reëcho that old-time refrain,
“Thus good with evil mingles — loss with gain.”

How do we know what evil is, or good? —
What, loss or gain? Ah, if we understood,

Should we thus scan God's deep but perfect way,
Singing, perchance, His goodness all astray —

In harsh discordance with that praiseful hymn
Struck from the lyres of His own cherubim?

Love writes the tune — and death, as life, must be
A fitting chord in the vast harmony.

And through the rhythmic maze I seem to hear
This word, deferring to our human fear: —

“Be of good heart, O ye of little faith!
For that which men call dying is not death.

“What if that life ye mourn as passed away,
Has but emerged from darkness into day?

“What if that other sphere it sprang to reach,
Were fair beyond the praise of human speech?

“What if, between the two — you who remain
And him who went, — his were the greater
gain?”

TRANSMUTATION

ROSE! from the gross earth drawing up
Wherewith to fill your scented cup,
Your secret tell, that our emprise
 May be as wise.

Lilies! that from such noisome pools
Distil such sweets, expound your rules;
That we the gracious hint may share,
 And grow as fair: —

We, formed for noblest ends, who yet
Our high prerogative forget,
Letting our earthliness prevent
 The purpose meant.

For the same fair design that shows
Supreme in lily and in rose,
Whereby they draw from vilest springs
 Divinest things,

Rules, too, for us, save that we spurn
The high intent and fail to learn
The wholesome secret, fail to see
 Our destiny.

Oh, to be wise and wisely use
Life's frets and hindrances! to choose
The good they yield, — nay, make the ill
Subservient still! —

Wresting from loss supremest gain,
Triumph from failure, bliss from bane, —
As rose and lily charms unfold
From mire and mould.

CHILD'S PLAY

WHERE thick the dandelions lie,
Like coins of gold among the grass,
I watch the children flitting by,
Plucking the blossoms as they pass; —

Their hands as full as they can hold,
Yet still on further conquest bent;
At every footstep clutching gold
Might make a miser's heart content!

And watching them, I muse and muse,
The while my thoughts outrun my theme;
Till Life and child's play interfuse,
And hold me, waking, in a dream: —

A dream whereof the burden reads
Like this: "God made my hand but small,

And earth is larger than my needs ;
Why should I seek to grasp it all ? ”

THE SOLVENT OF DOUBT

IDLING beside a mountain stream
That plashed and broke in endless play,
We sat and watched the dying day
What time the sun, with level beam,

In regal pomp sank westering,
While round him courtier-clouds did wait,
Ambitious for his royal state, —
That he should die as dies a king.

And we sat on ; the rest had grown
Impatient of our lengthened talk, —
“ And would we join them in their walk
And let such wizard themes alone ? ”

“ Nay, madcaps,” I had answered, “ lest
We take our wisdom too, and so
Your folly shame ; but do you go,
And leave us here to dream and rest.”

We sat entranced, my friend and I,
She with a sweet, unwonted grace,
A charm, new kindled in her face ;
I shrank to question whence or why.

The perfect air that round us curled
Faint bird-notes brought us, now and then,
Some thrush, belated in the glen,
Crooning his trouble to the world.

Then silence fell. She raised her head,
“I think the earth has fairer grown
These two weeks gone; we are alone,
And may I tell you why?” she said;

Nor paused for any answer, save
A pressure of my clasping hand,
A look half plea and half command,
As I might be her lord or slave.

“And yet not much have I to tell,”
Her words ran on, — “although it be
As I have said, — the world to me
Has fairer grown since it befell.

“It happened this wise: sick and faint
With city smoke and dust and heat,
I wandered out where two ways meet, —
That, leading backward to the taint

“And grime of city walls, and this,
Sweet with the telltale breath of woods
Whose infinite, deep solitudes
Gave hint of quiet ministries, —

- “ Such tendance as the soul bespeaks,
Grown weary in the treadmill round
Of social cares and frets that bound
The limits of the tiresome weeks.
- “ And yet not such my mental ail,
But, rather, Doubt, — that would not cease,
But poisoned all my happy ease
With subtle questions that assail
- “ One’s faith, so long unchallenged, —
The faith that simple childhood keeps
Before into its Eden creeps
The wily whisper, ‘ *Hath* God said ? ’
- “ And most this problem plagued my soul, —
‘ Is Christ divided ? — for they rend,
And fashion to ignoble end
His seamless robe that should be whole.’
- “ Thus questioning, my faith astray,
Distraught by doubtful, differing creeds,
And neither answering to my needs,
What marvel that I lost my way ?
- “ Who knows his danger ? I but knew
That I was weak as any child,
And tired of wandering in the wild,
Still searching for some hidden clue, —

- “Something wherewith to answer Doubt,
And put the dusky fiend to flight,
That, bat-like, hates the happy light,
And fain would put Truth’s candle out.
- “The tranced woods wove their deepest spells
That August afternoon, I ween ;
In measured pauses, far between,
I heard the distant city bells
- “Throb out the hours, but heeded not
The lapse of time, so lost was I ;
What was the charm of earth and sky
To me ? — their marvellous sweetness, what ?
- “So lost was I ! The woodpecker
Beat his monotonous, low drum,
The insects drawled their lazy hum,
The crickets chirped ; I did not stir.
- “The crickets chirped beneath my feet,
And far away I heard the moan
Of waves, the tender undertone
Of tidal waters, distant, sweet.
- “The brooding Presence of the wood
Did on me her soft finger lay,
Till ’neath the touch my soul gave way
And lapsed into a calmer mood.

“ ‘O rest! O peace! here let me sit
And dream my life away!’ I cried;
‘But wherefore?’ straight a voice replied.
‘Life was not given to squander it.’

“ With that, I started up, intent
On flight; but truly need was none,
So gracious was the manly tone,
So kind the look that on me bent.

“ And, once assured, I could recall
To whom the kindly voice belonged;
For I had heard it where the thronged
Charmed people listened in the hall

“ To cadenced measures fitly wed
To looks that were all eloquence,
And scarcely needed the pretence
Of speech, to be interpreted.

“ So, yielding without more ado
To what I deemed a happy chance,
I took my cue from circumstance
And answered lightly, ‘Even so;

“ ‘And yet, sir, you, methinks, of all,
More gracious judgment should allow.
Men name you Dreamer; read me now
The riddle your own lips let fall:—

“ ‘ *Are* dreams the chaff that idlers grow?
And do they squander life who dream?
Nay ; who but looks on you must deem
The verdict false, and answer, “ No.”

“ ‘ But for myself I cannot tell,
My dreams are little worth, in truth,
And mock me with a bitter ruth
When I do wake and break the spell.’

“ I paused, — alarmed that I had dared
So much, and fearing he might take
My candor wrong and might not make
Excuse for thoughts so lightly shared.

“ ‘ Ah, could he look within,’ I sighed,
‘ And see the trouble in my breast,
The heavy thoughts that will not rest,
The doubts, the void unsatisfied ! ’

“ And still the happy insects sang
Above my head, and still the whir
Of crickets in the grass astir
Beneath my feet melodious rang ;

“ And still the muffled undertone
Of tidal waters smote the ear ;
But I was deaf. I did not hear
Or hum or chirp or deep sea-moan.

- “ He read my trouble in my face,
And deftly, as a father might,
Interpreted the cause aright, —
Or so I guessed, — though for a space,
- “ He talked of other things, — the skies,
The changing clouds, blind Nature’s laws,
Obedient to the primal Cause,
The first great Soul that underlies
- “ And governs all : anon he spoke
On themes less alien, — how God’s plan
All culminated in the man
Christ Jesus ; then my soul awoke !
- “ ‘ What think you of the Christ ? ’ I said,
My courage rising with my need ;
‘ I ’ve searched for Him in sect and creed,
And find Him not alive, but dead.
- “ ‘ And yet I clasp this shadow dim,
This dead Christ, to my living soul,
Still asking, Who for me shall roll
The stone away that covers Him ?
- “ ‘ He is arisen, the priests reply,
Then straight dispute above the sign, —
The sacramental bread and wine,
Till, Your Christ is not God’s ! I cry.

- “ ‘ And so He is not what I need :
The Christ I seek must come to me,
(Or I to Him, whiche’er it be),
Unclaimed of any wrangling creed.
- “ ‘ Sweeter than psalm or liturgy
The music of His solemn voice,
If one could hear it for the noise
Of all the sects that disagree, —
- “ ‘ The carping wisdom of the schools, —
“ Lo, Christ is here ! lo, Christ is there ! ”
Ye doubts that drive me to despair,
’T was there ye learned your cunning rules !
- “ ‘ For oh, the cruel doubts that jeer
And mock at my bewildered quest !
The vague misgivings unexpressed !
The echoed taunt, — “ Lo, there ! lo, here ! ”
- “ ‘ Till I am fain to cry, “ Give o’er ;
There is no Christ ; or, if there be,
I doubt there is a Christ for me :
I will not seek Him any more ! ’ ”
- “ I looked up, passion-flushed ; but he
Stood grave, yet kind, — as though reproof
Were, for the moment, kept aloof
By stronger force of sympathy.

- “ ‘ Poor child ! ’ he answered, ‘ not alone
You walk, encompassed by this cloud ;
But where one speaks his doubt aloud,
A thousand die and make no moan.
- “ ‘ And yet not blameless in His sight,
His pure and searching sight, you stand,
Whose fan is in His purging hand,
And who will judge all hearts aright.
- “ ‘ Think you the flaws of creed and sect
Will plead for you when He shall roll
The curtain from your separate soul,
And bid you look on His Elect,
- “ ‘ His Well-Belovëd, whom you slew
With cruel doubts because, forsooth,
He showed unsightly and uncouth,
For the poor lens you viewed Him through ?
- “ ‘ Beware ! who stumbles on this stone
Is bruised ; but ground to powder he
On whom it falls ! No empty plea
Will aught avail before His throne.’
- “ A hoarse wind smote the forest boughs,
That bent and shrieked : for all reply
I pointed to the threatening sky ; —
‘ And you are far from any house,’

“He said, ‘and may I lead you hence?
The storm is gathering. Hasten! come!’
And like a child he led me home,
Unwitting of the finer sense,

“The deeper meaning that my soul
Gave to his words, ‘O hasten! come!’
And how indeed he led me home,
Doubt-cured, and ransomed, and made whole.

“O Christ of God!” — and reverently
She raised her eyes, — “thou art the Way!
Sects differ, creeds may lead astray;
Blest is the man who follows thee.”

She ceased. The setting sun, alight,
Fell on her golden curls and shed
A sudden glory round her head;
I looked, and read the symbol right,

And thought, “O beautified and crowned!
O friend, how fair, how blest thou art!
Who follows Christ with single heart
All good in heaven and earth has found.”

A laugh, a gay tone on the breeze!
The merry loiterers had returned;
Our hearts within our bosoms burned,
We could not cope with sounds like these.

“’T is late, and let us go,” I said,
And led the way home through the dew,
She following ; — though of the two,
She was the leader, I the led.

THOUGHT AND SPEECH

THERE came to me a thought
By winged Fancy brought,
Subtle as flame ; of light and sweetness wrought.

With costly pains and care,
I sought in words as rare,
To clasp and hold it : it exhaled in air

And vanished, — all the grace,
The gleam ; and in its place,
A cold abstraction stared me in the face.

“ O thought forever fled ! ”
Then to myself I said ;
“ O sweetness lost ! O fine aroma shed ! ”

“ Not so,” a voice replied ;
“ Thought lives and shall abide :
Only to utter it has been denied.”

THE COST

EAGLE, bruised in your dizzy flight,
 Soaring yon jagged crests among ;
 Poet-heart, on your lonely height,
 Wounded, scaling the peaks of Wrong, —
 A bleeding bosom were poor requite
 For an eagle's wing and a poet's song !

WHO KNOWS

A CHILD lay sleeping in the rosy dawn,
 And sleeping, dreamed. What fancies crossed
 his brain
 We know not : now a shadow, as of pain,
 Clouded his tranquil features, and anon
 A smile lay beautiful his face upon ;
 The household stirred around him, but in vain
 The noisy prattle of the household train
 To break the spell ; outside, upon the lawn,
 The birds sang shrilly, and the clarion cocks
 Answered with lusty cheer ; but all unheard
 By him or crow of cock or song of bird.

Who knows but life be such : a dream that locks
 Our senses to the Real about us rife !
 If sleep can thus enthrall us, may not life ?

AN OPEN SECRET

WOULD the lark sing the sweeter if he knew
 A thousand hearts hung breathless on his lay?
 And if "How fair!" the rose could hear us
 say,

Would she, her primal fairness to outdo,
 Take on a richer scent, a lovelier hue?
 Who knows or cares to answer yea or nay?
 O tuneful lark! sail, singing, on your way,
 Brimmed with excess of ecstasy; and you,
 Sweet rose! renew with every perfect June
 Your perfect blossoming! Still Nature-wise,
 Sing, bloom, because ye must, and not for
 praise.

If only we, who covet the fair boon
 Of well-earned fame, and wonder where it lies,
 Would read the secret in your simple ways!

COMPENSATION

NOT in each shell the diver brings to air
 Is found the priceless pearl, but only where
 Mangled, and torn, and bruised well-nigh to
 death,
 The wounded oyster draws its laboring breath.
 Oh, tried and suffering soul! gauge here your gain;
The pearl of patience is the fruit of pain.

BE LIKE THE SUN

BE like the sun, that pours its ray
To glad and glorify the day.

Be like the moon, that sheds its light
To bless and beautify the night.

Be like the stars, that sparkle on,
Although the sun and moon be gone.

Be like the skies, that steadfast are,
Though absent sun and moon and star.

WAITING

BE patient : under the patient sun
The sweet fruits ripen, one by one.

Be patient : steadily, sand by sand,
The green earth grew in God's great hand.

Be patient : where now the oak is found,
Once slept an acorn underground.

Slowly the fruit swings ripe in the sun ;
Slowly God's work on earth is done.

Slow climbs the oak from the acorn's shell ;
Slower climbs justice from its dark cell.

Slowly the great earth grew and grew ;
Slower the growth of the good and true :

Slower but surer ; the stoutest oak
Falls 'neath the woodman's sturdy stroke.

Fruits that mellowest swing and sway
Ripen at length to a slow decay ;

And this great, green earth, from pole to pole,
Shall shrivel and scorch like a burning scroll ;

But truth and justice shall stand for aye,
Though the heavens and earth should pass away.

Let us be patient, and work and wait ;
Good is omnipotent, God is great.

Let us be patient with perfect trust ;
Truth is eternal and God is just.

THE FOUR MOTTOES

“ Look up and not down ! ” — do you mind how
the tree-top
Rejoices in sunshine denied to its root ?

And hear how the lark, gazing skyward, is
flooding
All earth with its song, while the ground-bird is
mute?

“Look out and not in!” — see the sap rushing
outward
In leaf, bud, and blossom; all winter it lay
Imprisoned, while earth wore a white desolation;
Now Nature is glad with the beauty of May.

“Look forward, not back!” — ’Tis the chant of
creation,
The chime of the seasons as onward they roll;
’Tis the pulse of the world, ’tis the hope of the
ages, —
This voice of the Lord in the depths of the
soul!

“Lend a hand!” — like the sun, that turns
night into morning,
The moon, that guides storm-driven sailors to
land: —
Ah, life were worth living with this for its
watchword —
“Look up, out, and forward, and each lend a
hand!”

LE ROI EST MORT! VIVE LE ROI!

“THE king is dead! Long live the king!” One
breath

For knell and coronation: that is brave!

Why should we linger, mourning, at the grave
Of an old creed outgrown, when some “God
saith”

Is calling us to a diviner faith?

Or stay, in sorrow’s penitential wave

The ashes of some darling sin to lave,
Or selfish passion that has died the death?

Nay, nay, — the king is dead! long live the
king!

The king of loftier trust and larger hope

And better purposes and purer aims.

Ring, O my soul, glad acclamations ring

From all your happy towers, till cope to cope

“Long live the king! long live the king!”
proclaims.

A TALE OF TWO BUCKETS

Two buckets in an ancient well

got talking once together,

And after sundry wise remarks, —

no doubt about the weather, —

“Look here,” quoth one, “this life we lead
I don’t exactly like ;
Upon my word, I’m half inclined
to venture on a strike ;
For, do you mind? however full
we both come up the well,
We go down empty, — always shall,
for aught that I can tell.”

“That’s true,” the other said ; “but then,
the way it looks to me, —
However empty we go down,
we come up full, you see.”
Wise little bucket! If we each
would look at life that way,
Would dwarf its ills and magnify
its blessings, day by day,
The world would be a happier place,
since we should all decide
Only the buckets *full* to count,
and let the empty slide.

AN INCIDENT

SARAH paused anear the window,
Gathered up her baby form,
And with pleased, incredulous wonder,
Gazed upon the wintry storm.

Slowly fell the glittering snowflakes,
One by one, like blossoms fair,
Rifled from some bower of roses
By the covetous summer air ;
Nearer drew the child, her eyes
Dilating with a large surprise.

“Flowers !” at length she murmurs softly,
Upward gazing all the while,
Till the fancy warms her features
With a bright exulting smile.
Bravo ! she has solved the problem
To her own sweet faith, at least,
And she hugs the dear illusion
Till the glittering show has ceased ;
Seeing only in the storm
Summer blossoms fresh and warm !

Darling, show my heart the lesson ;
When life’s dreary tempests rise,
Teach me how to stand and face them
With thy hopeful, happy eyes !
In each trial well surmounted
Finding germs of future bliss,
Till I reach that happier dwelling
Where, in looking back on this,
I shall see life’s stormiest hours
Wove for me but sweetest flowers !

THE DAME AND THE CRITIC

[Versified from Hans Christian Andersen's Tale, "Something."]

Two souls, just freed from mortal guise,
 Knelt at the gates of Paradise ;
 He, arrogant and bold of mien,
 She, meek yet fearless and serene,
 And as the time seemed long to wait
 Before the opening of the gate,
 They fell to talking.

“ Dame,” quoth he,
 “ While good St. Peter finds the key,
 Pray tell me, if it 's no offence,
 Your name, and how you came, and whence ;
 What you accomplished worthily.”
 (A pedant and a critic he,
 More skilled to censure than to praise,
 The man had passed his mortal days
 In slothful ease, his caustic pen
 Belaboring better, busier men.)

“ I am old Margaret,” she replied ;
 “ My home and hut the sea beside :
 I 've lived a quiet, simple life,
 By crime unsoiled, unvexed by strife ;
 But as for aught that I have been,
 Or done, these blessed gates to win,
 I make no plea.”

“ But tell me now,”

The critic questioned, "why and how
You left the world."

"I scarce can tell,"

She answered ; "what at last befell
Seems all so strange ! I can recall
But this : beyond the great sea-wall,
Built out to keep the tide at bay,
The townfolk forth had gone to play
On pleasant lutes, and dance and feast,
Upon the ice : the crowd increased
With every movement. From my bed
(For I was feeble, sick, and old,
Nay, helpless, if the truth were told)
I saw the moon rise, round and red,
And marked along the marge a cloud,
Slow-spreading, white as any shroud ;
And, as I looked, its centre grew
Black, black as ink. Ah, then I knew,
For I had seen the sign before,
In my long life beside the shore, —
Had seen the fearful omen twice,
And knew the errand that it bore
To the doomed people on the ice.

"I knew that tempest, flood and wreck
Were waiting on its awful beck ;
That ere an hour should pass, the deep
Its bonds would break and overleap
The wall in floods ; was it too late
To save my people from their fate ?

Alas, what hand, unless 't were mine,
 Could warn them, knowing not the sign?
 'Dear Lord, in mercy give me power
 To save them in this fearful hour,'
 I cried in sorest agony:
 He heard, He heard and answered me.
 Strength came to me in every limb,
 My weakness seemed a sick-bed whim;
 I rose, I ran, I reached the door,
 I rent the air with frantic cries, —
 'Good friends, good neighbors! I implore!
 Yon cloud, yon cloud! make for the shore!'
 In vain; no questions, no replies
 Came back to me; my voice was drowned
 Amid the feasting and the sound
 Of lute and viol. Once again
 Twice, thrice, I called, — in vain, in vain!

"But suddenly a daring thought,
 A purpose! it was heaven that wrought
 And sent it me: could I but fire
 My hut, my home, and thus the dire
 Calamity forestall! I knew
 The people were too good and true
 To guess what plight were mine nor come
 Quick to the rescue: so, with numb
 And trembling hands, I lit the straw
 That filled my frugal bed; I saw, —
 O joy, — I saw the red flames rise,
 I heard the people's sudden cries,

And, groping blindly to the door,
Beheld them hurrying to the shore,
Beheld them pass the great sea-wall,
And knew that I had saved them all !

“ Then came a rushing, deafening sound,
A crash, as if the solid ground
Were breaking up ; then chaos, night :
I know no more. The shock, the fright
Were too much for a helpless thing
Like me, and so death’s pitying wing
Hovered above and brought me here,
To find a home of light and cheer
In place of that I lost below ;
Or so I trust. But this I know,
’T is all of grace, if it be so.”

With that the gates were opened wide,
And straight an angel to her side
Swift glided, with a glad intent
To lead her in. As on they went,
A straw, which had escaped the fire
When first she lit her funeral pyre,
Fell at her feet ; and while the two
Looked down upon it, lo, it grew
Into a spray of purest gold,
With leaves and blossoms manifold !
“ Fair symbol of a good deed wrought !”
The angel cried, “ and hast thou aught,
O critic, aught like this to show

In proof of service down below?
Then hear thy doom."

The Dame's kind soul
Was moved to pity: "Give him dole
Of the large grace vouchsafed to me,"
She pleaded of the angel; "see,
His brother wrought me, at my need,
Bricks for my hut: shall not this deed
Atone?"

"You hear," the angel cried,
"Another's work must be applied
To cover your life-lack! not so;
And yet a respite I bestow:
Remain outside; a day of grace
Is granted you; if in this place,
Where yet repentance may avail,
You see your folly and bewail
Your error, and through earnest quest,
Accomplish something, — not the best,
But something, — it may be that you,
Saved as by fire, shall enter too,
And find within this blissful gate
A home."

The critic heard his fate:
"That little speech I could have wrought
Much more effectively," he thought,
But from expressing it refrained;
And that, for him, was something gained.

A POEM OF NATURE

THE world is growing old, — so sages say
And poets sing ; but look abroad to-day :
How like a monarch, throned and plenty-crowned,
Our regal earth ! her ruddy temples bound
With chaplets of bright flowers, and at her feet
Her waving harvests and her fruitage sweet.
Here are no signs of eld or dull decay,
Despite what poets sing and sages say.

Man ripens and decays ; his glorious powers
Dim 'neath the shade of his declining hours ;
Age dulls his eye, and ere his knell is rung,
Palsies the cunning of his glowing tongue.
Man, man decays, but earth is ever young !

Dear mother-earth ! as fresh as when at first
In Eden's garden her young life was nursed ; —
Renewed each year, as often as the spring
Sets all the trees astir with blossoming,
And witches into music every stream
Beneath the magic of her April gleam !
See how the generous sap from her own heart
Pours without stint, and strengthens every part
Of her young offspring ; trees and shrubs and
flowers

Share in her fulness and partake her powers.
She paints her roses, and with equal care
Flushes with carmine nectarine and pear ;

She hangs her grapes out, sweet and purple-dyed,
Nor slights the grass green-growing far and wide ;
Her loving hands with equal skill adorn
The crimson tulip and the tasselled corn.
No partial step-dame she, our mother-earth !
She counts naught alien nor of stranger birth ;
Her broad breast cradles all her love brings forth,
Nor weighs her favors by the claimant's worth.

A lesson here for us, O gentle friends !
Though, in good sooth, whoe'er obedient lends
A listening ear in nature's patient school
Will shape his life by many a wholesome rule
Not chronicled in books, — and therefore we,
Tillers of earth, who all her secrets see
As well as hear, what patterns we should be !

But this by way of prelude to a strain
Which, though but rudely sung, yet hopes to gain
Your ears attentive, — though we all agree
The theme's but hackneyed, — nathless, come
with me

Down this rude lane, ablaze with goldenrod
And fresh with fragrance from the upturned sod,
To where yon farmhouse lifts its modest head,
By peace, content and health inhabited.
The tranquil kine, reposing in the grass,
Turn dreamy eyes upon us as we pass ;
The shy sheep gaze askance, and chanticleer
Disturbs the silence with a lusty cheer
From the far barn-yard: sights and sounds are
these

To make the saddest cheerful and at ease.
How full the quiet spot of sweet perfumes,
Aromas of fresh grass and clover-blooms!
How like a Sabbath stillness, or like prayer,
The cloistered calm of this sequestered air!

Anon the swinging scythe perchance is heard ;
Anon the sacred, Sabbath calm is stirred
By sounding flail or woodman's axe anear,
Reëchoing through the forest sharp and clear :
The dim old forest, where the children go
A-nutting when the leaves are all aglow
Beneath the frost-king's touch. Such merry routs
The little people tell of thereabouts !
And then the huskings and the apple-bees,
The pleasant picnics underneath the trees, —
What city belle can boast such joys as these ?

But not outside the modest farmhouse dwells
Its sweetest charm ; that quiet roof-tree tells
Of love and trust beneath its humble dome,
And all that glads and sanctifies a home.
Here the good housewife plies her cheerful tasks
From morn to eve, nor gift nor guerdon asks
Save the sweet payment of her husband's smile,
And God's dear love, and health and strength the
while.

Her rosy daughters, not too fine to soil
Their pretty fingers with the marks of toil,
With cheerful patience sew the lengthened seam,
Prepare the meal or churn the yellow cream,
Or lead the toddling baby that essays

Unequal steps about the household ways,
 Or hasten to the door when daylight fails
 To unburden "father" of his brimming pails.
 Thrice happy man, thrice happy father he!
 His smoking supper ready, on his knee
 The crowing baby, and around his board
 Health and content, he well may thank the Lord!

Life has its trials, whatsoe'er our lot;
 But if there be, on God's dear earth, one spot
 Crowned more than others with his favors lent,
 'T is such a home as this: all sweet content,
 All peaceful, heavenly influences meet
 To purify, enrich and make it sweet.
 Within, without, around it and above,
 Good thoughts, like blessed angels, rove and rove.
 The very cattle, knee-deep in the brooks,
 Have lessons for us in their patient looks;
 The silent hills, slow-stretching far away,
 The shady hollows with the lambs at play
 In their cool bosoms, the rejoicing rills,
 The sobbing of the lonely whip-poor-wills,
 The misty glories of the purpling morn,
 The night's deep splendor when the stars are
 born,
 The corn up-springing 'neath the sun and rain,
 The ripening fruitage and the nodding grain,
 The changing seasons as they come and go,
 Winter the pilgrim, with his coif of snow,
 Spring the sweet charmer, summer all ablaze
 'Neath the rich dower of her meridian days,

And, best of all, glad autumn blithe and sweet,
Laying her wealth uncounted at our feet! —
Who, living out his peaceful life among
Scenes such as these, more eloquent than tongue
Of priest or prelate, who, if he be wise
To learn the lessons set before his eyes,
But shall imbibe the wisdom they impart,
And win the blessing of the “pure in heart!” —
Such as “see God,” — see Him not only there,
In His dear, far-off heaven, but everywhere:
In the bright glancing of the robin’s wing,
As in a planet’s steady, ceaseless swing;
In the small mercies of the passing years,
As in the forces which control the spheres;
In little household trials, wisely sent,
As in the pangs which rend a continent;
In every strange vicissitude of earth,
In smiling plenty and in direful dearth;
See Him in all His gracious hand has sent
Of joy and sorrow mercifully blent,
And seeing, love, and loving, be content!

NATURE AND POET

No poet ever wholly caught
Or fully uttered Nature’s thought:
The stream flows sweeter than the lay
Sung in its praise; the rosy day
Is fairer than was ever told
By bard sublime or minstrel bold.

The truest note is his who sings
The closest to the heart of things,
Though conscious, all the while, how far
Away his nearest ventures are, —
That earth and air and sea and sky
Are rhythmic with a harmony
Whose core of sweetness human speech,
Probe as it may, can never reach.

Nature's great anthem, all unsung
Save by herself! Could mortal tongue
But voice these wordless symphonies
And sound her music as it is!
Challenge the silence held so long
And syllable in perfect song
Her deeper wonders, larger moods, —
The splendor of her autumn woods,
The regal blossoming of dawn,
Night with its crown of silence on!
Chant the full glory of a star
And tell how fair the Pleiads are!
Hymn the informing life which glows
In the red bosom of the rose,
And makes the listening daisy sweet
With wide-eyed wonder at our feet!
Translate — what yet no human ear
To finest issues tuned can hear —
The elfin songs the blossoms sing,
Chimes that the merry bluebells ring,
The daffodilly's roundelay,

And what the happy kingcups say !
Make audible, by some sweet art,
The secret at the lily's heart !
Voice, in swift changes manifold,
The rainbow's sheen, the sunset's gold,
Moonrise upon the lonely seas,
The breath of morn on upland leas,
June's freshness, spring's prophetic stir,
The countless signs that herald her,
The majesty of hills, the rush
Of rivers, midnight's awful hush !

Yet faint not, poet-heart, nor miss
Thy birthright crown because of this !
Nature no miser is, to hold
And hide her wealth, as men do gold ;
Nor yet a spendthrift, reaching out
An easy alms to every lout
Presuming on her grace. She gives
To none her high prerogatives ;
Keeps her sealed orders, signed of old,
Inviolatè within her hold ;
Yet, pitiful of human need,
She bends to us with answering meed
Of sympathy, — where most besought,
Bestowing most, and grudging naught
That mortal fantasy can reach
And comprehend in mortal speech.
Her awful pageants go and come,
And leave thee as they found thee, — dumb ;

Her sweet surprises thron'g thy way
And dare thy worthiest essay
To give them voice ; the more pursued
The more they mock thee and elude.
What then ? In ways unnumbered still,
She summons all thy human skill,
By signs which thou canst understand,
To grasp her purpose large and grand,
And make thyself, through guest of her,
Her loyal, true interpreter.

For Nature aye doth condescend
To such ; her poet is her friend :
She gives him insight, lends him wings,
And bids him soar the while he sings ;
Purges his soul of its old ache, —
The greed of fame for fame's own sake, —
Till, haply, in its place, he find
A burning zeal to serve his kind :
His song she witches with her tone
Till half it seems her very own :
By deeper than Castalian founts
She leads him, and to fairer mounts
Than fair Parnassus ; bids him drink,
Unsated, at the purer brink
Of her pure lips, and walk abreast
With Truth upon her mountain crest.

JANUARY

GOOD-DAY, new world! Like him of Genoa,
We glad adventurers kneel and kiss the strand
Of our emprise, — this new-discovered land
Of time, — and cry, “ Good-day, new world! good
day!”

Onward, brave hearts! keep doubt and fear at
bay!

These ambushed ills which lurk on every hand
Are but allies to lead us into grand
Possession of ourselves, and of the way.

Oh year! new year! World yet untried and
strange!

For him who thus adventures, all good things
You hold in store; for he it is who brings

Hope to the front, and courage: him, no
change

Shall harm or weaken, nor shall any chance
Rob him of his divine inheritance.

FEBRUARY

WINTER at length slow-waning to its close,
Nature declares her penance well-nigh done;

And sends, in challenge to the laggard sun,
Fair, truant days, balmy and soft as those
May scatters: then mock-penitent she grows,

Owens the sad cheat, — and jubilant, like one
 Who knows no master, apes, for very fun,
 Her old-time rigors, piling deep her snows
 As in midwinter. Ah, a wayward thing
 Is Nature! Something of her April mood
 Disturbs — nay, warms and quickens all her
 blood;

And whether summer, winter, autumn, spring,
 Holds her in leash, she breaks away at will, —
 Supreme for all her bonds, and regnant still!

MARCH

MONTH of the warlike name and warring blast,
 Welcome! since both belie thee. Thou dost
 bring

Sealed orders with thee from the gentle spring,
 And, in thy noisy coming, we forecast

Her milder advent. Ay, we know thou hast

A loyal heart, despite the stormy ring

Of thy rude war-cry! Late, a bluebird's wing
 Athwart thy clouded path unchallenged passed;

But yesterday, arbutus buds I spied,
 Covered with snow for leaves, — sweet babes
 o' the wood! —

And noted, peeping up in bravest mood,

Green, growing things that would no longer
 hide:

And while thy shrillest winds piped overhead,
 “Ah, spring is coming!” to myself I said.

APRIL

SUMMER's forerunner ! See, she sendeth thee
To search the land and make it soft with show-
ers

And sun and dew, and fit it for her flowers.
Haste, then, sweet month, — ply all thy witchery
To do her bidding : frozen brooks set free

With softest blowing winds ; from southern
bowers

Call the blithe robin ; to essay its powers
Of ruddy bloom, tease the red maple tree

Till it make answer ; coax with violets,
And shame with life astir beneath her snow,
The cold, reluctant earth, that she may grow

Right motherly, and mindful of her pets, —
And, quick with May, at length yield richest
boon,

The red, red roses, and the pinks of June.

MAY

I SAW a child, once, that had lost its way

In a great city : ah, dear heaven, such eyes ! —

A far-off look in them, as if the skies

Her birthplace were. So looks to me the May.

April is winsome, June is glad and gay ;

May glides betwixt them in such wondering
wise,

Lovely as dropped from some fair Paradise,
And knowing, all the while, herself astray.

Or is the fault with us? Nay, call it not
A fault, but a sweet trouble! Is it we, —
Catching some glimpse of our own destiny

In May's renewing touch, some yearning
thought
Of heaven, beneath her resurrecting hand, —
We who are aliens, lost in a strange land?

JUNE

FAIR month of roses! Who would sing her
praise,

One says, should come direct from banqueting
On honey from Hymettus, that he bring
Fit flavor to the strain his lip essays.

As if, around these exquisite, rare days

Of richest June, such sweetness did not cling,
For him who fain her loveliness would sing,
As Hybla or Hymettus scarce could raise,
With all their storied bees!

And yet, in vain,
Poet, your verse! Extol her as you will,
One perfect rose her praises shall distil
More than all song, though Sappho lead the
strain.

Forbear then; since, for any tribute fit,
Her own rare lips alone can utter it!

JULY

SET like a central ruby on the brow
Of summer, but a fiery mouth thou art,
July! and yet we hail thee. Thou hast part
In Nature's chivalry: knight-errant thou, —
Hot, fierce, impetuous; on thy lips a vow
To do thy great devoirs with loyal heart,
Thy lance the sunbeam, laid in rest to thwart
All alien forces. Ah, right brave, I trow,
The deeds that we shall hear of! In the corn
Already there are whisperings; harvest days
Shall bring full tidings, heralding thy praise,
And the ripe year, winding his jocund horn,
Shall boast thy brave exploits with lusty breath
And own thee knightly even unto death.

AUGUST

WE read of high-born dames, sick of life's glare,
Who in dim cloisters fain would end their days,
Exchanging pomp for pious prayer and praise:
Summer, is such thy *rôle*, that thou dost wear
This nun-like torpor in thine altered air?
We miss the sweet June freshness, and the
ways
Of happy, hot July: this August haze
Is like a veil shrouding thy features fair;

This drowsy stillness is a convent-calm,
 Oppressing us like sadness. Oh, sweet nun,
 Is it for penance? What deed hast thou done,
 That happy mirth should change to sob and
 psalm,
 And telling of thy beads against the pane
 In the low patter of this August rain?

SEPTEMBER

THE days once more their dainty fare outspread;
 For Nature, roused from dreams, and making
 good,
 At length, the promise of her larger mood,
 No longer doles us out her wine and bread
 In scanty sort, — but pours for us, instead,
 Her spicy, sweet September! Now the blood
 Of high resolve begins again to flood
 Our nerveless souls, and life wakes, duty-wed.
 Nature, wise steward, thou art justified!
 For thou hast kept the good wine until now,
 Against this tardy bridal, this late vow
 Pledging our days to toil while days abide: —
 Where are the fallow fields, that we may sow
 And reap the latter harvest, ere we go?

OCTOBER

OF all the twelve, bright month! art thou the one
Best loved of Nature, that, with partial care,
She bids her subtle elements prepare
This robe of beauty for her favorite son, —
This coat of many colors, deftly spun
From tissues of the rainbow, from the rare,
Brave hues of sunset when the day dies fair,
From misty, purple dawns, ere begun
Is the swift, beautiful coming of the light?
O princely garniture! Well may the rest
(In dun, or ermine, or soft greenness drest),
Beholding thee thus royally bedight,
Envy thy state, thou favorite of the year,
Darling of Nature, month without a peer!

NOVEMBER

LIKE a late watcher, tired and sleep-inclined,
Yet patient at her post and smiling still,
The year keeps vigil. Look you where you will,
In all her wide domain you shall not find
Her hand has lost its cunning: still the wind
Plays its soft descants; still each rippling rill
Goes singing seaward; while, on every hill,
The sun pours benediction bland and kind
As blest the summer; still the crickets hide

In the warm grass, — and ever and anon,
 A bee reels by, store-laden from the lawn
 Where bloom late flowers, alert and open-
 eyed:
 “How fair,” they sigh with me, “and oh, how
 dear,
 This lingering sweetness of the dying year!”

DECEMBER

DEAR month that gave us Christ! Ring sweet,
 ring strong,

O bells of Christmas! Quickened by your
 chime,

Our eager wishes, like swift birds that climb
 Far-reaching heights, soar up to catch the song
 The wondering shepherds heard. Will it be long,
 Before the sweetness of that strain sublime
 Shall set itself to earth? — poor, rugged rhyme
 To mate such music!

Shepherd-souls! that throng
 Beneath the starry silence, keeping guard,
 Tending your patient hopes, like flocks by night,
 Have ye not, sometimes, from yon heavenly
 height,

Caught faintest whispers of that advent-word
 Heralding Christ once more, “Peace and good
 will,

Peace upon earth?” O shepherds, keep watch still.

SPRING

APPLE blossoms in the orchard,
Singing birds on every tree ;
Grass a-growing in the meadows
Just as green as green can be ;

Violets in shady places, —
Sweetest flowers were ever seen !
Hosts of starry dandelions, —
“ Drops of gold among the green ! ”

Pale arbutus, fairy wind-flowers,
Innocents in smiling flocks ;
Coolest ferns within the hollows,
Columbines among the rocks ;

Dripping streams, delicious mosses,
Tassels on the maple trees ;
Drowsy insects, humming, humming ;
Golden butterflies, and bees ;

Daffodils in garden borders,
Fiery tulips dashed with dew ;
Crocus flowers ; and, through the greenness,
Snow-drops looking out at you !

IN MAY

THE spring is here ; the orchard-blooms
Like snow-flakes whiten all the air :
I smell the delicate perfumes
Of apricot and pear.

I wander down the gravelled slopes,
And take the garden path that leads
Where, in their blind assurance, gropes
My buried store of seeds.

Ah, Nature fails me not ! she keeps
Her promise sacred as of old ;
See where its glad fulfilment peeps
Up through the softened mould ;

Pansies and pinks and daffodils,
A brave array of bursting green ;
Prophetic of the bloom that fills
The summer days with sheen.

A handful of unsightly seed,
Faith's offering, in faith I brought,
And lo, in answer to the deed,
A miracle is wrought !

And soon the summer's wizard hours
Shall crown the witchery of spring,

And I shall walk among my flowers
As happy as a king.

Nature, great conjurer ! I kneel
Abashed and awed before her shrine :
Would some weird whisper might reveal
And make her secret mine !

Yet this we know, if only this :
She follows on where we essay
A smoother path ; small marvel 't is
That we do go astray.

She follows on through night and noon :
Makes odds, that else would work her ill,
Her slaves ; she yokes the sun and moon
To her imperious will !

Wrests blessing from the clouds and heat,
Makes vilest offal tribute pay ;
And ever, from what seems defeat,
Plucks victory away.

And when shall come her autumn days,
And she among her fruits and flowers
Stands justified, how bright her bays
Shall be, compared with ours !

Ah, did we copy nature's ways,
Her consummations we might share ;

What songs of triumph we should raise !
What palms of victory bear !

A DAY IN SUMMER

BIRDS are singing through the branches,
On this leafy summer day ;
Thoughts are singing through my spirit,
Radiant and glad as they.

I am thinking, as I ramble,
Of the olden, olden times
When I wandered through the meadows,
Weaving happy childish rhymes.

Just such sunny skies bent o'er me
As are bending o'er me now ;
Just such sweet love-making breezes
Kissed and kissed me, cheek and brow.

Now the same deep spell comes o'er me,
With the breath of this sweet day,
Like a fresh, serene baptism
From the meadows far away.

And my heart is glad and happy
With the pure joy of a child ;
Glad because the Father sends it
Thoughts so calm and undefiled.

Gladder yet that still it trembles
To the music of the rhymes
That I wove among the meadows
Of the olden, olden times.

IN MIDSUMMER

A FIELD of clover in the heat ;
Dusty brown bees with laden thighs,—
Shaming the idle butterflies,
The saucy poacher-folk they meet,
Which steal but never store the prize
And make no gain of all the sweet.

A lawless clan ! Despite the sign,
I watch, entranced, the lovely things !
I feed upon their painted wings ;
I drink their beauty in like wine !
Honey is sweet : I doubt it brings,
To sip it, pleasure half so fine.

Then let who will extol the bees ;
For me, the idle butterflies.
O happy vagrants, if unwise !
I watch you sail in spendthrift ease,
And shutting my toil-weary eyes,
Own that my mood with yours agrees.

OCTOBER INEFFABLE

I'M out in the free woods once more,
With whispering boughs o'erhead,
Strange influences round me steal,
And yet, what deepliest I feel
Must ever be unsaid.

These glowing, glowing autumn hours,
These gorgeous, wildering days!
This dainty show of painted flowers,
As though with dusky-golden showers
The air were all ablaze!

This living, shining, burnished wood, —
Decked with a thousand dyes!
Its strong ribs laced with crimson sheen,
And tricked with gold and glittering green,
Like kingly tapestries!

This tangled roof of braided light
Above me richly flung!
These glimpses of the sky's soft blue,
This quivering sunshine melting through,
This wide earth, glory-hung!

How shall I utter all I would?
Alas, my struggling soul, —
It strives to voice these glorious things

As strives a bird on broken wings
To struggle to its goal.

AUTUMN

OH, the lovely autumn days,
When the earth is all ablaze
With a thousand kindling dyes,
And a misty glory lies
All about our common ways!
When a hush is in the air
Like an inarticulate prayer,
Nature, underneath her breath,
Giving thanks for life in death:
Death, so beautiful and rare,
Life itself were not so fair.

Spring is tardy, changeful, fleet;
Summer comes with dust and heat
Waiting on her flying feet:
But the peaceful autumn stays,
Blest and blessing, all her days.
She it is who mellows well
Dainty, luscious fruits that swell
From the laggard buds of spring
And the summer's blossoming.
Ah, they need her wholesome touch,
Lest they ripen overmuch;
So, with tempered breath, she cools

All the fevered air, and schools
Nature to her own wise rules ;
Then, her labor done, she pours
Out her bountiful, rich stores, —
Lighting up, on every hill,
Altar-fires, and kindling still
Flames of sacrificial thanks
Over all her viny banks.

Spring is tardy, changeful, fleet ;
Summer comes with dust and heat ;
But the peaceful autumn stays,
Blest and blessing, all her days.

IN AUTUMN

PUT on your beautiful garments,
O toiling earth, and rest !
The goal is won and the toil is done,
And now you may don your best,
Your robe of purple and scarlet,
Your tassels and plumes of gold,
The misty sheen of your veil of green
And your mantle's crimson fold.

O earth, so glad and so fruitful !
O nature, so brave and true !
I would that we were as wise as ye
In the work we have to do !

We loiter and waste, — we sow not,
Or scatter our seed in vain, —
For the stony field must be *wrought* to yield
Its treasure of golden grain.

“Put on your beautiful garments,
O toiling soul, and rest!”
Faint heart of mine! to that call divine
Be all thy powers addressed;
Sowing beside all waters,
Faithful in that which is least,
Constant and still, do the Master’s will
Till the time of toil has ceased.

Then the peace that shall come and the gladness!
The service that shall be rest!
And the plaudit won of that word, “Well done!”
And the Master’s “Come, ye blest!”
O earth! in your sweet fruition
Rejoice and be glad! but this,
The joy of a soul that has reached its goal,
Is a deeper, holier bliss.

OCTOBER WOODS

A MOOD

O BLAZING woods, lit up with splendors rare !
 To sing your state, methinks, were but akin
 To his essay whose mocking violin
 Sang burning Rome. These bright, bright robes
 you wear
 Have charms too perilous, because they bear
 The seal of Death. If only we could win
 Your old look back, and stand once more within
 Your aisles of greenness !

Ah! this show and glare
 But mean our banishment. Dear doomèd
 woods,
 Where we have wandered the gay summer long,
 Soft, flickering sunshine and the wild bird's song
 Making like Eden your sweet solitudes —
 A flaming sword guards all your gates, in guise
 Of light and beauty : farewell, Paradise !

SUMMER IN WINTER

THE summer never quite departs ;
 Despite the snow and sleet and ice,
 I hold her to my heart of hearts
 By many a lovely, quaint device.

One glance upon my pictured walls
Brings back her sunny face to me, —
Her meadow-lands and waterfalls,
And haunts of wild-wood greenery.

Her birds flash out in plumage gay
From frame and easel, — nested things,
That never pine, nor once essay
A flight upon their gleaming wings.

Her plummy grasses deck my stand,
Her oaks and maples flaunt their sheen
Of red and gold (by autumn's hand
Transfigured), here and there between.

Her flowers and fruits are mine ; I raise
My hand, and — artist-wrought — I see
Great crimson roses, lily sprays,
And blossoms of the fair sweet-pea.

And still, above my daily board,
To feast my beauty-loving eye,
Her June-fed strawberries are poured,
And cherries sunned by hot July.

Her gracious presence, too, I meet
In alien things ; my frosted panes
The glories of her realm repeat
And duplicate her broad domains :

Great forests here, perhaps ; and there,
A wilderness of feathery brakes ;
Strange, tropic growths, grotesque or fair ;
Rushes and reeds by silver lakes.

So summer never quite departs ;
For, spite the snow and sleet and ice,
She holds me to her heart of hearts
By many a cunning, quaint device.

HOMESICK

TALK not of leafy summer woods,
Their wealth of sweetest minstrelsy,
Their sylvan shades and solitudes, —
I languish for my own blue sea !

Breathing the blossom-breath that scents
The verdurous branches of the pine,
My longing grows but more intense
For flavors of the salt sea brine.

I stand and call : I stretch my hands,
Imploring, to yon distant main : —
“O sea-lapped shore, O pebbly lands,
Fold me in your embrace again.”

Only the murmurous winds send back
An answer, — winds that pine and moan

Along the wild wood's leafy track
With ever melancholy tone.

O glory-crested waves, that flaunt
Your brightness in this bright sunshine!
Still, still your far-off voices haunt,
And ever shall, this heart of mine.

THE RAIN

HEIGH-HO! the rain,
The wild, impetuous rain!
Hear how it raves at my window-pane!
Hurrying down with a mad commotion,
Mad as the din of a storm-lashed ocean, —
Sweeping the mountain, pelting the plain, —
Heigh-ho! the wild, impetuous rain!

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The chiding, querulous rain!
Hear how it scolds at my window-pane!
See on the boughs that are well-nigh breaking,
Hundreds of leaves in their terror shaking;
Seeming to murmur this sad refrain, —
“Heigh-ho! the chiding, querulous rain.”

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The restless, tremulous rain!
Hear how it beats at my window-pane!

Beats like a heart by fear affrighted,
Beats like a heart with love delighted ;
Half in gladness and half in pain, —
Heigh-ho ! the restless, tremulous rain !

Heigh-ho ! the rain,
The pleading, pitiful rain !
Hear how it sighs at my window-pane !
Type of a breast that is full of sorrow,
Sighing for peace and a brighter morrow ;
Sighs that are uttered too oft in vain, —
Heigh-ho ! the pleading, pitiful rain !

Heigh-ho ! the rain,
The weary, desolate rain !
Hear how it sobs at my window-pane !
Sobs like a child that has lost its mother,
And never, never can find another
To love and cherish like *her* again !
Heigh-ho ! the weary, desolate rain !

Heigh-ho ! the rain,
The dainty, delicate rain !
Hear how it taps at my window-pane !
Gratefully sweet, like Love's moist fingers
Laid on a brow where fever lingers,
Drip the cool sounds on my heated brain, —
Heigh-ho ! the dainty, delicate rain !

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The lovely, musical rain!
Hear how it chants at my window-pane!
Hushed is the tempest's petulant chiding,
Gently and gracefully now 't is gliding
Into a calm and beautiful strain, —
Heigh-ho! the lovely, musical rain!

Heigh-ho! the rain,
The fitful, vanishing rain!
Now it has ceased at my window-pane;
Through the torn edge of a cloud just parted,
See! one tremulous star has started;
Putting to silence my dull refrain, —
“Heigh-ho! the fitful, vanishing rain!”

BUTTERCUPS

BUTTERCUPS among the grass,
Smiling on us as we pass,
Lifting up such happy faces, —
Starry-bright and bathed in dew, —
Ah, if we could be like you,
Each contented in our places!

Whether skies be bright or sad,
Little matters: you are glad,
Darlings, in all sorts of weather;
Just as happy here as there,

Just as fresh and debonair
Singly as in crowds together.

By the side of dusty street
Cheerful as in meadow sweet:
Name the spell, that we may try it!
Ah, could gold its purchase be,
Friend, 't were wise in you and me,
Selling all we have to buy it!

WHAT THE BIRDS SAY

WHEN they chatter together, — the robins and
sparrows,
Bluebirds and bobolinks, — all the day long,
What do they talk of? The sky and the sun-
shine,
The state of the weather, the last pretty song ;

Of love and of friendship, and all the sweet trifles
That go to make bird-life so careless and free ;
The number of grubs in the apple-tree yonder,
The promise of fruit in the big cherry-tree ;

Of matches in prospect ; how Robin and Jenny
Are planning together to build them a nest ;
How Bobolink left Mrs. Bobolink moping
At home, and went off on a lark with the
rest.

Such mild little slanders! such innocent gossip!
Such gay little coquetries, pretty and bright!
Such happy love-makings! such talks in the orchard!
Such chatterings at daybreak! such whisperings at night!

O birds in the tree-tops! O robins and sparrows!
O bluebirds and bobolinks! What would be
May
Without your glad presence, — the songs that you
sing us,
And all the sweet nothings we fancy you say?

THE CHICKADEE'S SONG

IN autumn and winter, and far into spring,
There's a blithe little songster abroad on the
wing:
His note is as chipper as chipper can be;
'Tis the glad little, bright little, brave chickadee.

The sky may be threat'ning, the sky may be
fair;
The bough may be leafy, the bough may be
bare;
He cares not the whisk of a feather, — not he, —
This bright little, blithe little, brave chickadee!

Soft May, bleak December, — what matter to
him?

He lights on a snow-wreath, or sways on a limb,
And pipes his small numbers with resolute glee, —
This bright little, smart little, brave chickadee.

I wonder if ever the world goes awry
With him and his household, — if cats, on the sly,
Invade his small homestead: how sad that would
be,

You dear little, good little, brave chickadee!

But I think, even then, you'd be out the next
day

With the same cheery song; and to me it would
say,

“I've had lots of trouble, but still, as you see,
I'm the same little, brisk little, blithe chickadee.

“They may pester me, pillage me, rout me: what
then?

I can pluck up my courage and try it again;
Who talks of repining or fretting?” says he, —
This wise little, blithe little, brave chickadee!

TO A KATYDID

SPRITE, in leafy covert hid,
'Twixt your “did n't” and your “did,”

Simple folk are quite in doubt
What your talk is all about.

“*Did*” and “*did n't!*” That 's a clear
Contradiction, Katie, dear;
One would think you scarcely knew
Any odds between the two.

“*Did?*” but what? And where? And when?
“*Did n't!*” There you go again!
Such a slippery little chit! —
After all, what matters it?

Who — do you imagine — cares,
Katie, for your small affairs?
Hold your peace; and, for the rest,
We 'll concede you did your best.

If you did n't, more 's the shame;
If you did, then where 's the blame?
So give o'er: you won't be chid
Though you did n't or you did.

Only — your own counsel keep,
Letting honest people sleep;
If you did, then be it so;
If you did n't, let it go!

WHY CATS WASH AFTER EATING

A CAT, one day, a sparrow caught ;
 About to eat her up,
 "Stop!" cried the sparrow. "Gentlemen
 Should wash before they sup."
 Grimalkin paused. To be presumed
 So fine was rather nice.
 "Quite true," he said and dropped the bird,
 To follow her advice.

Off flew the sparrow. "Ah ; you rogue,"
 Cried pussy, in a rage,
 "So that's your game? But I'll be wise
 In future, I'll engage!
 I'll never wash before I eat,
 But after." Which is still
 A fashion that the cats keep up,
 And, doubtless, always will.

WONDER-LAND

I WONDER what makes the sky so blue ;
 I wonder what makes the moon so bright,
 And whether the lovely stars are born,
 Like brand-new babies, each summer night.

And why do they hide when daylight comes?
 I wonder where in the world they go!

Perhaps, when the great, hot sun gets up,
They dry like dew, or they melt like snow.

I wonder what makes the flowers so sweet ;
And where do they get their splendid dyes ?
And why should some be as red as blood,
And others blue as the summer skies ?

I wonder, too, — but so much there is
To puzzle my little head ! — and oh,
I doubt if ever I 'll find out half
The wonderful things that I want to know.

MY HERITAGE

I AM not poor : I own the seas,
The earth and all its boundaries.
These happy skies that o'er my head
Serenely float, for me were spread ;
For me this sun goes blazing through
Its path of light ; for me the dew
Fills, morn and eve, its chalice up ;
The tulip paints for me its cup ;
Mine every flower that decks the glade ;
For me the singing birds were made ;
The winds that blow, blow soft for me,
For me they pipe their stormy glee ;
The great woods hang their banners out
To hail my coming thereabout ;

At my poor feet, all bare and brown,
They drop their nutty treasures down ;
The squirrel — honest fellow he,
For all his tricks — goes halves with me :
He shares my nuts, and I his glee.

I feel a very millionaire,
Such wealth have I ! The earth and air
Pay tribute to me everywhere.
To feed me, Nature hangs her store
Of summer fruit about my door.
See where her loaded trees incline
Their boughs ! to pluck and eat is mine.
I ask not how her plums unfold
Their globes of purple and of gold ;
Nor how her sun-bright cherries grow, —
Whether they toil and spin or no
Small thought have I ; I but outreach
My hand, and lo, the golden peach,
Sweet with the sweetness of the south,
Drops honeyed ripeness on my mouth.
Nature, kind mother, — I her heir, —
She cares for me without my care :
For me her rosy apples blush,
Her perfumed pears grow large and lush ;
From vines her dainty finger drapes
With green, she pulls me purple grapes ;
She makes the ground I walk on sweet
With blackberries beneath my feet ;
She plants my path with flowers, and nods

And smiles to me in goldenrods
And painted buttercups ; she throws
Rich odors round the musky rose ;
Or, coyer grown, hides faint perfumes
In violets and arbutus-blooms,
And laughs, through all her realms, to see
How sweet her breath is unto me !
She syllables in meadow brooks
And sunny glades and sylvan nooks
Love such as never was in books.
Sweet priestess, too, — she reads to me
Her liturgies from every tree,
And chants her solemn service where
Her bluebells call to praise and prayer,
Or breathes, through her eternal calms,
Her inarticulate, sweet psalms.
She makes me earnest, grave or gay,
As suits her mood ; and yet, alway
She ministers to mine ; she knows
I love all bright things, — so, with shows
Of glittering gold and crimson sheen,
And purple, draped with richest green,
She lights for me her solitudes
And paints my way adown her woods ;
She calls her squirrels out, to greet
My coming with their frisky feet ;
Her merry crickets, too, to stir
The silence with their tuneful whir ;
She bids her birds with jocund song
Pipe music to me all day long ;

For me their prodigal sweet notes
Leap, liquid, from their golden throats.
Thus fare I at her hands: and so,
With feast and song and royal show,
She waits on me where'er I go.

Even winter pays his tithe of joy
Into my lap. I love the boy!
He comes with boisterous, honest mirth,
And lights the fire upon my hearth;
And while the blazing embers shine,
I crack my nuts and drink my wine
Of sweet content, — rejoicing, still,
To let the urchin have his will.
What though he pile my path with snow?
I take my shovel down and go
To earn my meal of morning air;
The veriest clown with me may share,
Nor pay a farthing for his fare.
And then I take it back in coin
Of health and strength, — this toil of mine.
I get, in payment for my pains,
A quicker flow through all my veins;
My cheeks a richer carmine show
Than French cosmetics could bestow;
A subtle grace my lithe limbs gain
That rules of art might teach in vain.
Nor this alone the urchin pays
To offset his uncanny ways;
For look you! every frosty morn,

He comes with jewels to adorn
Each tree and shrub beside my door ;
I gaze, — I am no longer poor.
I walk a king ! My cottage shed
No longer shelters me : instead,
A palace roofs me, rich and grand,
Dizened with gems of every land.
A thousand glittering rubies shine,
Like great, rich drops of frozen wine,
Beneath this royal roof of mine.
The diamond and the opal flame
A near me ; jewels wanting name, —
So bright they be, so rich and rare, —
Flash splendor round me everywhere.

I shut my glory-blinded eyes
For sheer relief, — and straight arise
Thoughts of that glorious vision told
By John : the city made of gold
Stands open to my gaze ; I see
That too was built for me, for me !
And while my spirit faints away
For very joy, sweet voices say,
“ Thine is the fair, fruit-bearing tree,
Thine is the burning jasper sea,
Thine the white robe, the crown, the palm,
Thine heaven’s serene, eternal calm ! ”

The vision fades ; I take again
Life’s duties up, like other men ;
But oh, the perfect calm, the peace

That wraps me and shall still increase,
Until, this happy journey o'er,
My feet shall touch that shining shore,
Shall touch and leave it nevermore!
So live I on, contented still
To go or stay, as suits His will;
And singing in my heart this song
Of sweetness as I pass along : —

“ Dear Lord, if such the earthly gauge
Of my immortal heritage,
If such the imperfect glimpses given,
The faint foreshadowings of heaven,
The taste of sweets in store for me,
What shall the full fruition be?
And what the treasures of Thy love
And grace laid up for me above?
I cannot tell; I but believe
No tongue can speak nor heart conceive
The sweetness, the surpassing bliss
Of *that* world, far transcending *this*.
I cannot tell; I only know
I own all things, above, below:
All things, — and still, through gain and loss,
Through hero's crown and martyr's cross,
I see but one bright promise shine,
I read but one illumined line,
I know but this, — all things are mine! ”

DO THEY MISS ME AT HOME?

Do they miss me at home, do they miss me?

'T would be an assurance most dear
To know that this moment some loved one
Was saying, "Oh, were she but here!"
To know that the group at the fireside
Were thinking of me as I roam, —
Oh yes, 't would be joy beyond measure,
To know that they missed me at home!

When twilight approaches, — the season
That ever was sacred to song, —
Does some one repeat my name over,
And sigh that I tarry so long?
And is there a chord in the music
That 's missed when my voice is away?
And a chord in each heart that awaketh
Regret at my wearisome stay?

Do they place me a chair near the table
When evening's home-pleasures are nigh,
And candles are lit in the parlor,
And stars in the calm azure sky?
And when the good-nights are repeated,
Does each the dear memory keep,
And think of the absent, and waft me
A whispered "Good-night" ere they sleep?

Do they miss me at home, do they miss me,
 At morning, at noon and at night?
 And lingers one gloomy shade round them
 That only my presence can light?
 Are joys less invitingly welcomed,
 And pleasures less dear than before,
 Because one is missed from the circle, —
 Because *I* am with them no more?

Oh yes — they *do* miss me! Kind voices
 Are calling me back as I roam,
 And eyes have grown weary with weeping,
 And watch but to welcome me home!
 Sweet friends, ye shall wait me no longer,
 No longer I'll linger behind;
 For how can I tarry, while followed
 By watchings and pleadings so kind?

THE GOOD WIFE

“A prudent wife is from the Lord.” “Whoso findeth a wife,
 findeth a good thing.” — *Proverbs of Solomon.*

AY, Lord! and I do thank Thee, — sure that she
 Whom I do call “gude-wife,” was sent by Thee;
 And I accept her humbly, and do make
 This rude yet heartsome verse for her dear sake.

How fair she is, beseems not me to tell;
 Yet sweet Rebekah by the ancient well

More sweet, more fair, more beauteous scarce
 could be,
Than is my love, my fair one, unto me.

She sits with Mary at the Master's feet ;
With Martha rises to prepare Him meat ;
With Dorcas plies her needle's shining steel
To assuage the woes she cannot wholly heal.

She maketh little coats with Hannah's care,
And Hannah's forethought, for the children's
 wear ;
And if in Shiloh ever they appear
Be sure the mother-hand hath led them there.

She plies the distaff, and with equal skill
Discourseth music at her own sweet will ;
While on her lips the law of kindness reigns,
And in her heart the rule of love obtains.

She riseth while 't is night, — and giveth each
Their portion ; and with gentle look and speech,
She doth prevent the evening on the hill,
Since, where she smileth, it is daybreak still !

Sweet mother-wife ! she careth for us all ;
The little, lonely sparrow on the wall
Sees the white glancing of her hand, and straight
Flies for his portion at her bounteous gate.

So blest and blessing, she doth 'mongst us move,
 A sweet embodiment of perfect love ;
 I see her white wings growing day by day,
 I almost hear heaven calling, " Come away ! "

Nay, nay ; not yet, dear Lord ! I need her still ;
 Thou hast Thine angels on Thy holy hill ;
 Leave, leave me mine, — for yet a little while
 Lend me her hand, her voice, her gentle smile.

For she to me is Thine own angel given
 To show my lagging feet the way to heaven ;
 She ministers to me in such sweet guise !
 I read Thy gospel in her gracious eyes !

Bereft of her, I doubt this grief-dimmed eye
 The heavenly heights henceforward could descry
 For human tears ! Then take her not, I pray,
 Or take me with her up the shining way !

A MOTHER'S LOVE

LIKE the first star that heralds glorious eve,
 Like the first blush that beckons in the day,
 Like the first snowdrop lavish Aprils weave
 To deck the bosom of the festive May ;
 Like the warm carol of the early bird
 Whose note was mute before, or idly heard ;
 Like all dear things just bursting ; like the bloom

Of the first rosebud rending its green tomb, —
So burst thy love upon my helpless life,
Dear Mother, when that hour of pain and strife
That laid me in thine arms, gave place to tears
Of exquisite, sweet joy and holy fears !
Thy love, dear mother, warmed me into birth,
Nor shall its ray depart while either dwells on
earth !

BABY'S WARDROBE

FOLD them all up, the clothes she wore,
Each dainty frock and pinafore :
She will not wear them any more.

They were all made with my own hand ;
I laid each plait, I wrought each band
With care you could not understand.

“ No need,” you said ; “ a plainer dress
Befits her years : and Art's excess
But hinders Nature's perfectness.

“ For see the lilies, how they grow, —
God fashioned them, and yet we know
Not Solomon was apparelled so.”

“ Ay, see the lilies,” I replied ;
“ God made them fair, and I abide
His wisdom who did so decide.

“ For He loves beauty everywhere,
And whoso seeks to make more fair
His work, works with Him unaware.

“ The hint God gives me I shall take,
And help, in my poor way, to make
His gift complete for His gift's sake.”

Oh, my own Lillie! no more dead
Beneath the lilies, but, instead,
All glory-crowned, and habited

In shining raiment pure and white, —
I think I sinned not in His sight
Who clothes you now with robes of light ;

I think I did not err in aught
Because, with mother-care and thought
(Perhaps with mother-pride), I sought

To link with your sweet babyhood
All sweet surroundings, — good with good,
Lovely with lovely, — as I should.

The angels have you now ; you wear
Robes fashioned with more subtle care,
And fairer, whiter than these are.

I fret not, sweet ! a strange content
Is with my daily yearnings blent ;
For, thinking of the way you went,

I see no dismal valley, black
With terrors, — but a shining track
And a white angel looking back !

“ ONLY ME ”

A LITTLE figure glided through the hall ;
“ Is that you, Pet ? ” the words came tenderly :
A sob — suppressed to let the answer fall —
“ It is n't Pet, mamma ; it 's only me.”

The quivering baby lips ! they had not meant
To utter any word could plant a sting,
But to that mother-heart a strange pang went ;
She heard, and stood like a convicted thing !

One instant, and a happy little face
Thrilled 'neath unwonted kisses rained above :
And, from that moment, “ Only Me ” had place
And part with “ Pet ” in tender mother-love.

THE CHILD'S LAST WISH

“ MOTHER, dear mother, the day is done ;
Rapidly sinketh the setting sun, —
While on the wings of the passing hours,
Lingers the breath of the shutting flowers.
Mother, dear mother, before I die,

Throw up the sash to the clear night sky ;
Fain would I whisper a last farewell
To the gentle flowers that I loved so well."

The mother rose with a tearful eye,
And threw up the sash to the evening sky.

"Mother, dear mother, they all are there
With their gentle eyes and their foreheads fair ;
Lily and violet, myrtle and rose,
Laying them down to their night's repose.
Mother, I wish I could pass away
From this lovely earth with the dying day !
How sweet to be borne to celestial bowers
On the pleasant breath of the fainting flowers !"

The mother turned with an anxious eye,
And gazed on her darling tearfully.

"Mother, dear mother, I fain would rest,
Pillowed once more on your loving breast.
Dark to my vision is twilight now,
Cold are the shadows that press my brow.
Mother, dear mother, your gentle face
Mid the thick darkness no more I trace ;
Death is around me, — farewell ! I roam
On the breath of flowers to my heavenly home."

The mother gazed, but her tears were dried ;
Her child, with the fainting blossoms, died.

MAY DREAMS

“WHERE have you been, this long, bright day?”

I said last night to a tired child ;

“I’ve been to the woods to see if May

Is coming,” she said, and gravely smiled.

“And what did you find, sweet searcher, — what ?

How did the woods reward your quest ?”

“I found one blue forget-me-not,

And a robin thinking about his nest ;

“And springing grasses and clover-shoots,

And a bluebird singing overhead ;

Violets under some gnarled old roots,

And nodding columbines white and red ;

“Some star-flowers, too, by a shady pool,

Such wee, white things ! and I bathed my feet

In a dancing rivulet, clear and cool,

And I gathered ferns and mosses sweet ;

“Oh, and so many things besides !

But now I am tired, please, — good night !”

And she lays her hand in mine and glides

Gently, gracefully out of sight.

But her last words haunt me, soft and low, —

“Oh, and so many things besides !”

Ah, sweet dreamer! you little know
 All the meaning that in them hides!

Faith in an end as yet unseen,
 Boundless trust in a promised good, —
These were the spoils that you brought yestreen,
 Richest of all, from that dim old wood!

Build, O robin, your downy nest!
 Sing, O bluebird, and dance, O stream!
 Spring, all green things, and own her quest!
 Come, O May-time, and crown her dream!

MABEL'S CURE

“THE world is even as we take it,
 And life, dear child, is what we make it.”

Thus spoke a grandame, bent with care,
 To little Mabel, flushed and fair.

But Mabel took no heed that day,
 Of what she heard her grandame say.

Years after, when, no more a child,
 Her path in life seemed dark and wild,

Back to her heart the memory came
 Of that quaint utterance of the dame:

“The world, dear child, is as we take it,
And life, be sure, is what we make it.”

She cleared her brow : and smiling, thought,
“’T is even as the good soul taught !

“And half my woes thus quickly cured,
The other half may be endured.”

No more her heart its shadow wore ;
She grew a little child once more.

A little child in love and trust,
She took the world, — as we, too, must, —

In happy mood ; and lo ! it grew
Brighter and brighter to her view !

She made of life — as we, too, should —
A joy ; and lo ! all things were good !

A MEMORY

“And tho’ a thousand read these lines,
But twain shall understand.”

I HAD a friend once, and she was to me
What fragrance is to flowers, or song to birds, —
Part of my being : but there came a time
(I cannot tell you how, or when, or where),

A time that severed us. There was no fierce,
Hot trouble at our parting. It was calm,
Because it was so gradual. Ere I knew,
We had grown cold at meeting, colder still
At our good-by. But, looking on it now,
After long years, I marvel at it all,
And weep more tears than I did then, by far,
Over this strange, sad parting, this blank wreck
Of love, and hope, and friendship, and warm
trust.

Oh, it is pitiful, — this breaking up
Of human sympathy and sweet heart-tryst !
Had we so many friends — this friend and I —
That we could well afford to give the slip
Each to the other ? drifting thus apart,
Like ships that meet upon some tropic sea
For one brief passing hour, exchange stale news,
Gossip of cargoes, or the last-made port,
Then sail away, each on its separate course,
And never dream, nor care, to meet again !

I think the heart grows chary of its friends,
As years and death do steal them from our grasp ;
I could not let a friend go now as I
Did then ; for I was thoughtless then and
young.

Ah well ! I wonder if she cares, or if
She ever thinks of those old, foolish days
When, with her hand in mine, we sat and talked,
And kissed each other 'twixt our happy words,

And vowed "eternal friendship," — endless trust.
 It may be so; and if this idle verse
 (Albeit not so idle as it seems),
 Should meet her eye, — I would, I would it
 might! —

She too may give a sigh to those old days,
 And wish, with me, that one had been more true,
 And both more patient, — that the olden time
 Had less of bitterness mixed with its sweet,
 Making the after-draught so drugged with pain
 That, even now, tears come because of it.

THE REASON

DEAR Love, bear with me that so long
 My harp has lain unstrung, unswept,
 Since to have waked it while it slept
 Had been to do my nature wrong.

How could I pour in measured chime
 My brimming love's intensity?
 Or level one dear thought of thee
 To the low stature of a rhyme?

Enough that in my heart's deep well
 Lies love by language yet unstirred,
 Unfathomed yet by any word,
 Beyond what lip of mine can tell.

Then bear with me, nor chiding say,
 “Why thus?” but rather, “Be it so;
 Let words, the froth of feeling, go;
Her love lies deeper far than they.”

REQUITAL

[A. W. B.]

THE violets are growing on her grave
 Who last year gave me roses dewy-cool,
Saying, “Take these, dear heart, and these: to
 have
 And not bestow, were but a sorry rule.”

And so she rained them on me as she clung
 To the light lattice, — clusters red and white
And palest pink, in musky showers down-flung,
 Till the June air grew moist with coming
 night.

And now she lies the violets below,
 And June, with all its roses, cannot stir
One pulse of her sweet being: let them go!
 They bloom in vain for me, since not for her.

And yet not quite in vain, my heart, — not quite;
 For when these buds, slow-trembling into
 bloom,

Open their bosoms to the soft June light
 Gilding alike their beauty and her tomb,

'T will be my turn to pluck them ; I shall go
 With brimful hands, some June day, where
 she lies,

And shower them o'er her, weeping : will she
 know

The sweet requital in those far-off skies ?

RECONCILIATION

IF thou wert lying cold and still and white
 In death's embraces, O mine enemy !
 I think that if I came and looked on thee,
 I should forgive ; that something in the sight
 Of thy still face would conquer me, by right
 Of death's sad impotence, and I should see
 How pitiful a thing it is to be
 At feud with aught that's mortal.

So to-night,

My soul, unfurling her white flag of peace,
 Forestalling that dread hour when we may
 meet, —

The dead face and the living, — fain would cry,
 Across the years, " Oh, let our warfare cease !

Life is so short, and hatred is not sweet :

Let there be peace between us ere we die ! "

IN MEMORIAM

LAST year we watched the robins build,
The mated robins glad and free :
To-day my eyes with tears are filled ;
Once more the mated robins build,
But she is gone who watched with me.

Last year we walked and gathered flowers
Together, blossoms wan and wee,
Arbutus blooms ; but now the hours
May pass, — ungathered grow the flowers,
For she is gone who walked with me.

O grave, sweet face, with eyes of brown
That wistful still do turn to me,
I cannot bid your image down !
Go where I will, your eyes of brown
Still follow, and still yearn to me.

Sometimes her favorite air I play,
And wonder, as I wake the strings,
If spirits passed from earth away
Are touched by earthly things.

Then I recall her words that fell
One night, "That lovely melody
You never play one half so well
For others as for me."

I never play it now, dear heart,
Without a throb half joy, half pain, —
As if you, somehow, stood apart
And listened to the strain.

I know how ravishing must be
Heaven's music in your happy ears,
Yet something whispers low to me,
“ Play on : she hears ! she hears ! ”

Then how the sweet notes throb and swell
Beneath my touch ! Dear heart, 't is true :
I never play one half so well
For others as for you !

THE GRAVE BY THE EUXINE

[H. B. S.]

I TOOK from my garden a rosebud ;
It was sweet, it was fair ;
I wore it awhile on my bosom ;
It perished there.

“ From whence comes this exquisite fragrance ? ”
Then I said, — for, in part,
I 'd forgotten the beautiful rosebud
I wore on my heart.

And it answered me, — leaf by leaf drooping,
 Fading still, fading slow, —
 “Unmeasured in life, my full sweetness
Death makes you know !”

And I thought of a grave by the Euxine,
 And my tears fell like rain :
 But roses will wither, and loved ones
 Return not again.

AROMA

[H. B. S.]

O FAIREST rose, whose fragrant, dying breath
 Fills my hushed room ! thou mind'st me, fading
 there,
 Of one who kept as sweet a tryst with death
 After a life as fair.

This friend — few peers she had — we could divine
 Her presence by a secret, subtle sense
 Of something pure about us, rare and fine,
 And clean of all pretence.

And if she joyed or wept with us, anon
 Our joy grew deeper ; and anon our tears,
 Sunned by her sweetness, rainbow hues took on,
 And spanned our cloudy fears.

No spell occult, no secret marvellous,
She held ; yet wrought, as by a hint divine,
The old time miracle, and turned for us
Life's water into wine.

O brief, bright life ! — exhaling as it fled
Undying fragrance — leaving to our keep
Such sweetness that we cannot hold her dead,
For all these tears we weep.

Poor tears ! poor words, our grief that cannot tell !
And yet that grief were scant which words
could speak :
So rills outbabbled rivers ; it is well ;
Let words for us be weak.

Fade, fairest rose ! all the hushed air around
Is sweet because of thee ; and thou, O friend,
Because of thee all earth is holy ground,
And shall be to the end.

DISSOLVING VIEWS

WHEN I have been long gone, if one I love,
And who loves me, shall chance upon a ring,
That I have worn, or any simple thing, —
A knot of ribbon, or a faded glove, —
I wonder if the sight of it will move
To fond remembrance, and if tears will spring,
And if the sudden memory will bring
A sudden sadness over field and grove.

Perhaps : and yet how quickly we forget !

And how new scenes, new faces that we meet,
Crowd out the old, — until the world grows
gay

Above forgotten graves. Softest regret

Grows stale by keeping ; and, however sweet,
No past has quite the sweetness of to-day.

WHEN I AM OLD

WHEN I am old, — and oh, how soon
Will life's sweet morning yield to noon,
And noon's broad, fervid, earnest light
Be shrouded in the solemn night ;
Till like a story well-nigh told,
Will seem my life — when I am old.

When I am old this breezy earth
Will lose for me its voice of mirth ;
The streams will have an undertone
Of sadness, not by right their own ;
And spring's sweet power in vain unfold
In rosy charms — when I am old.

When I am old I shall not care
To deck with flowers my faded hair ;
'T will be no vain desire of mine,
In rich and costly dress to shine :
Bright jewels and the brightest gold
Will charm me naught when I am old.

When I am old my friends will be
Old and infirm and bowed, like me ;
Or else, their bodies 'neath the sod,
Their spirits dwelling safe with God, —
The old church bell will long have tolled
Above their rest, when I am old.

When I am old I 'd rather bend
Thus sadly o'er each buried friend,
Than see them lose the earnest truth
That marks the friendship of our youth ;
'T will be so sad to have them cold
Or strange to me, when I am old !

When I am old ! oh, how it seems
Like the wild lunacy of dreams,
To picture, in prophetic rhyme,
That dim, far-distant, shadowy time ;
So distant that it seems o'erbold
Even to say — “ When I am old ! ”

When I am old ? perhaps ere then,
I shall be missed from haunts of men ;
Perhaps my dwelling will be found
Beneath the green and quiet mound ;
My name by stranger hands enrolled
Among the dead, ere I am old !

Ere I am old ? that time is now,
For youth sits lightly on my brow ;

My limbs are firm, and strong, and free ;
 Life has a thousand charms for me, —
 Charms that will long their influence hold
 Within my heart ere I am old.

Ere I am old, oh, let me give
 My life to learning how to live !
 Then shall I meet with willing heart
 An early summons to depart,
 Or find my lengthened days consoled
 By God's sweet peace, when I am old.

THE SUNDIAL

“*Horas non numero nisi serenas.*” — *Inscription on an old sundial.*

“ ‘ I NOTE the bright hours as they fly
 And let the dark uncounted die.’
 Wise words ! ” said one, as we rode by
 Where, on an ancient dial, scrolled
 In arabesque and carved in gold,
 Shone out that motto, quaint and old.

“ Wise words and brave ! ” and cheerily
 Her laugh rang out : and yet to me
 They hold scant wisdom. Can it be
 That both had knowledge to divine,
 And that her eyes had read the sign,
 With insight clear and true as mine ?

Each for herself: no doubt I lack
Where she abounds. But looking back
Along life's ever varying track,
For me its dim and clouded ways
Outvalue all the garish blaze
That lighted up its shining days;

Because they opened to my sight
(As stars are only seen by night)
Great vistas of celestial light;
Visions that darkness made my own,
Glimpses of things I had not known
But for the shadows round me thrown.

A CHRISTMAS LEGEND

HERMANN, the charcoal-burner, went home
through the forest one night,
The snow was falling about him like a great veil
soft and white:
'T was the eve of the blessed Christmas, and his
heart was glad and light.

For he said, "The wife and the children are wait-
ing me, I know,
And the lamps were lit on the fir-tree full half an
hour ago,—
I can almost see them gleaming through the white
mist of the snow."

But suddenly a faint wailing fell upon Hermann's
ear, —

Was it the wind in the branches? was it a cause-
less fear

Born of the night and the darkness? The old
man paused to hear.

It was not a causeless terror, it was not the
branches bare,

Tossing their arms in the windy and desolate win-
ter air;

'T was the voice of a wailing baby, innocent,
sweet and fair.

“Scantily clothed and shivering, sobbing alone in
the snow,

Why have they left thee, sweet one?” the old
man murmured low.

“See, I will take thee homeward! Little one,
wilt thou go?”

So he pressed the weeping baby close to his own
gaunt form,

And sheltered it in his bosom, away from the
smiting storm,

Till he reached his home by the forest, where the
Christmas lights gleamed warm.

And the good wife gave heart-welcome, while
higher still she piled

The board that with Christmas gladness and
Christmas plenty smiled,
And the children gathered around him to gaze at
the little child, —

The little desolate wanderer brought from the
forest gloom ;
They showed him the pretty fir-tree blazing with
light and bloom,
At the board with its smiling plenty they gave
the stranger room, —

Gazing and gazing upon him, the child so won-
drous fair,
With his clear blue eyes so shining, his cluster-
ing, golden hair,
Till, gazing, a sudden glory illumined all the air !

For over the curls so golden, a halo grew and
grew,
The soft eyes beamed new lustre, two white wings
blossomed through
The tips of the lovely shoulders, — then, gliding
from their view,

Spreading white hands of blessing, the beautiful
vision fled !
And Hermann knew of a surety, even as Christ
has said,
“ Who helpeth the poor and needy, helpeth the
Lord instead.”

A wailing soul looked out from eyes
Born blind to all sweet sanctities, —
As if life's husks even to her
Too meagre, poor and bitter were ;

As if despite her wretchedness
And wrongs, she asked not for redress,
So much as pity, guidance, light,
A chance to grope her way aright,

If haply even for her might shine
Some glimmering of a light divine,
Some faint, heaven-lighted, faltering ray
Slow-leading to a brighter day.

I saw the hunger in her face,
And loathing in my soul gave place
To instant, yearning love, akin
To his who said, " You without sin, —

If such there be, — the first stone cast ! ”
And, all my weakness overpast,
Obedient to the heavenly word,
My oil and wine I freely poured.

I housed her, fed her, clothed her, brought
Garments that my own hands had wrought ;
Till, 'neath my ministries, she grew
Transfigured to my pitying view.

In her poor form I but descried
A little one for whom Christ died,
And Mercy infinite stole in,
With her white hand and hid the sin ;

Or, rather, held it to my view
And bade me look as angels do, —
Joying o'er one who finds the way
More than o'er crowds who never stray.

So, mingling with her tears my own,
We knelt before one common throne
And, "God be merciful to me,
A sinner!" was her only plea.

Thus clinging to his garment's hem
Who came to pity, not condemn,
He bade her sobs convulsive cease,
And whispered, "Daughter, go in peace."

Oh sweet and gracious sacrament
Of love! I blessed her as she went,
And felt new life within me stir
Because of that new-given to her!

AMIN, THE MISER

LONG centuries ago — so runs the tale —
There raged a frightful famine in the land

Fed by the fruitful Nile : from morn till eve,
From evening until morn, a starving crowd, —
Mothers with babies wailing at their breasts,
Pinched, pallid children, men grown gaunt with
want, —

Besieged the granaries that the rich had filled
From the last plenteous harvest, — offering stores
Of gold and gear and precious household goods
For but a handful of the yellow grain
Piled up so high within. So, one by one,
The great doors opened to the clamorous pleas
Of the poor, starving wretches, hunger-mad.

At length but one remained, but one of all
The vast storehouses that the rich had filled
Against the time of need, — and that was owned
By Amin, the old miser. Day by day
He sat upon its steps, watching the march
Of the great famine fiend, — with hellish greed
Deep-calculating how he might extort,
Through man's sore need, the greatest usury
Out of God's loving bounty ; day by day,
The desperate people clamored at the gates,
Beseeching him for charity's sweet sake,
To give them but a morsel in exchange
For wealth laid up against old age and want
Through years of toil. The old man only jeered :

“ What ! would ye have me yield my precious
stores,

Worth twice, nay, thrice their weight in yellow
gold, —

To such poor pittance? nay, bring more, bring
more!

All that a man hath will he give for life;
And that is what I sell ye — life, life, life!”

Oh, pitiless! the starving creatures heard,
And homeward crawled with all their little
strength,

Bringing back gold, more gold, — until, at last,
Even the miser-soul of this old man
Was satisfied. With cruel, mocking zeal,
He hastes to open, — but recoils aghast
As the great doors slide back. Oh, judgment
meet!

For heaven had sent the worm into his corn;
And now, instead of piles of golden wheat,
A festering mass, — corruption, rottenness, —
Is all that meets his horror-stricken sight!

Starved as they were, the waiting, longing
crowd

Raised a great shout of triumph at the sure
And manifest judgment; Amin heard it not;
For God had smitten him, and he had died,
Down-stricken in his evil hour of pride.

A VOICE FOR THE POOR

PUT out the light
 And look into the night,
 Raise the curtain high and higher,
 Quench the glare of the blinding fire,
 So may we look to our heart's desire
 Into the night!
 Into the face of the black, black night.
 What a sight!
 Earth seems maddened with affright!
 Hear the wild wind shrieking, roaring,
 Mercy from the storm imploring,
 The merciless storm that never hears
 The wild wind pleading in his ears,
 Praying for a little space,
 A little slackening in the race.
 But the pitiless sleet keeps flying on
 Here and there and everywhere,
 Challenging the weary air
 To another race now this is won.
 Merciless storm, we pray thee, hark
 To the wild wind's praying;
 Listen through the dreary dark
 To what his pleading lips are saying:

" Oh, the poor,
 The poor and old,
 On the moor
 And on the wold, —

How desolate they are to-night and cold!

— I have been

To the cottage in the glen,

I whirled around the crazy shed

Where the children were all a-bed,

And I could hear them moan and weep,

For they could not sleep.

‘We cannot sleep,’ said they.

‘Father is out on the stormy bay,

And the night is dark and the sea is deep;

Would God that it were day!’

What more the little children said

I cannot say,

For I stopped my ears and whirled away

To pray in thine instead

For a little space,

A little slackening in the race,

That so the weeping children may

Behold again their father’s face,

Returning with the morning’s ray

Back from the stormy bay.”

But the merciless sleet keeps flying on

Here and there and everywhere,

Challenging the weary air

To another race now this is won.

Merciless storm, we pray thee, hark

To the wild wind’s praying;

Listen through the dreary dark

To what his pleading lips are saying:

“ Oh, the poor,
 The poor and old,
 On the moor
 And on the wold, —
 How desolate they are to-night and cold!
 — I met a traveller on the hill, —
 An old man, faint and very chill —
 Hoary with age and hoarier still
 With the white, blinding snow
 That over his hoary locks did blow.
 Pity the traveller old and gray!
 Maybe he has pushed all day
 Through the driving storm and sleet;
 Maybe he has lost his way,
 And his shivering feet,
 How they must long and ache to greet
 The glowing fireside’s genial heat!
 Pity the traveller old and gray,
 Pity the faint old man, I pray.”

But the merciless sleet keeps flying on
 Here and there and everywhere,
 Challenging the weary air
 To another race now this is won.
 Merciless storm, we pray thee, hark
 To the wild wind’s praying;
 Listen through the dreary dark
 To what his pleading lips are saying:

“ Oh, the poor,
 The poor and old,

On the moor
And on the wold, —
How desolate they are to-night and cold!
— I peeped into the broken panes,
Where the snow and sleet and rains
Of many a weary year have stolen
Till the sashes are smeared and soaked and
swollen;
Little children with tangled hair,
And lips awry and feet half bare,
Huddled around the smouldering fire,
Like beasts half crouching in their lair;
While each the while by stealth drew
nigher
Covetous of the others' share.
Oh, 't was a pitiful sight to see!
And mothers too were there
With infants shivering on their knee,
Or closer held with a mother's care,
Or laid to rest with a hurried prayer,
A moan, half hope and half despair,
A muttered 'Pitiless storm, forbear.' "

But the merciless sleet keeps flying on
Here and there and everywhere,
Challenging the weary air
To another race now this is won.
Yet over all, through sleet and rain,
I seem so hear this low refrain,
This sobbing, desolate, direful strain:

“ Oh, the poor,
The poor and old,
On the moor
And on the wold, —
How desolate they are to-night and cold ! ”
And I sit and muse at my window still,
And strain my eyes to the distant hill
In search of the traveller old and chill ;
For I long to brush from his shivering form
The angry curse of the hoary storm,
And take him in from the snow and sleet,
And wrap his aching feet
In soft, old moccasins, snug and warm ;
And fain, too, would I go
Through the drifted banks of snow,
To the crazy shed in the dismal glen,
Where the children are moaning so,
And whisper words of hope and cheer,
How that the storm, though bleak and drear,
Perchance by morning light will clear,
Bringing the father home again.
And in the alleys and wet lanes
Where freezing children huddle together,
'T were almost worth my pains
To face this desperate weather,
If but the wish to show them good
Would pile on the blazing wood
And give them shelter, and clothes, and food !
But here I sit at my window still,
With nothing to show but a hearty will

And earnest longing to help them each,
Though far beyond my reach ;
While still the wind's low, sobbing strain
Keeps smiting my ear with its sad refrain :

“ Oh, the poor,
The poor and old,
On the moor
And on the wold, —
How desolate they are to-night, and cold ! ”
And I think how sadly to us all
Wails up this universal call
From God's great earth, in heat or cold,
In bright or blustering weather, —
For each his brother's hand should hold,
And all should hope and strive together
As equal sons of one great Father.
God knows there is enough of care
For each to have his share !
Enough, alas, of crime and sin,
Not loved, perchance, nor gloried in,
But born of poverty and woes
The rich man never knows, —
Enough to make us all forbear, —
Enough to urge our warmest powers
In gladdening this poor world of ours, —
In sowing it with golden seeds
Of generous resolves and deeds, —
In scattering sunshine all around,
Alike on rich and fallow ground.

So would this earth be nearer God, —
 Till, throwing its warm life abroad,
 'T would blossom to the very skies,
 A harvest of glad prophecies!
 The aloe of the patient centuries!

A PLEA FOR THE DUMB

“THE Rights of Man!” O watchword brave!
 O glorious battle cry,
 Beneath whose stirring clarion-call brave men
 have dared to die!
 Thy triumphs still come down to us on fame's
 undying page,
 Thy champions are the great and good of every
 clime and age.

“The Rights of Woman!” Sacred call! born
 later, yet aglow
 With all that fired the hero heart in the dear long
 ago!
 Sublime in patience, sounding clear above all
 jarring din,
 “Our cause is just and shall prevail, 't is right-
 eous and shall win.”

These for themselves: but who shall speak for
 those whose mouths are dumb?
 The poor, brave brutes, with patient eyes, and
 feet that go and come

To do our bidding; toiling on without reward or
fee,
Wearing their very lives away, poor things, for
you and me!

Behold them! how they groan and sweat, beneath
the heavy load,
Each sinew taxed, each muscle strained; while,
sauntering up the road,
The lazy teamster walks abreast, — a brute him-
self, or worse, —
Urging the poor, spent creatures on, with whip
and thong and curse.

The brave, dumb things! no voice have they to
say, "Why do ye so?
Am I not man's most faithful slave; his friend
and not his foe?
Give me one kind, caressing word, undo this
heavy load,
Nor torture me along the way with whip and
thong and goad."

"No voice?" said I; nay, every blow, each
stinging, cutting stroke
Is eloquent of pain and wrong, as though an
angel spoke.
Thank God, at length the plea prevails, our
ANGELL takes the word,
And brave hearts rally at the call as by a trum-
pet stirred!

Dear friends! fair women, sweet with all your
 nameless charms and wiles,
 Bright, laughing maidens, flitting by in innocence
 and smiles,
 Gay children, grave and bearded men, we pray
 you all give ear;
 Dear friends, kind friends, we turn to you for
 sympathy and cheer.

Uphold us in our noble work, nor let us speak in
 vain
 For those too helpless to protest, too patient to
 complain;
 Be pitiful, be generous, to help us in our need,
 And He who notes the sparrow's fall shall surely
 bless the deed.

TOUCH NOT, TASTE NOT, HANDLE NOT

TOUCH not! Every ill is there, —
 Grief, insanity, despair.
 In that poisoned coil are rolled
 Woes unnumbered and untold.
 Yield not to the insidious foe;
 Touch not! Let the tempter go.

Taste not! Hear what wisdom saith:
 Shouldst thou taint thy pure, sweet breath?
 Quench thy young eye's lustrous light

'Neath its baneful, blasting blight?
No, by God's sweet goodness, no!
Taste not! Bid the tempter go.

Handle not! Within its clasp
Lurks the poison of the asp.
At the last 't will bite and sting
Like some vengeful, venom'd thing.
Stand, then, bravely in thy lot;
Touch not! Taste not! Handle not!

AGAINST ODDS

"I WILL be strong!" I said; alas!
That one weak moment should belie
The brave resolve, the purpose high —
"I will be strong" — but let it pass.

Ah, me, that life should have such dower,
Such fearful scope for good or ill;
And that we choose the evil still,
And falter in temptation's hour!

Oh, traitor heart, thrice recreant thou!
Again I cry, I will be strong —
Will yet be greater than the wrong —
Will yet achieve my life-time vow!

Bury my weakness, oh, ye crowd
Of faithful witnesses, who stand,

154 *TOUCH NOT, TASTE NOT, HANDLE NOT*

Dear friends! fair women, sweet with all your
nameless charms and wiles,
Bright, laughing maidens, flitting by in innocence
and smiles,
Gay children, grave and bearded men, we pray
you all give ear;
Dear friends, kind friends, we turn to you for
sympathy and cheer.

Uphold us in our noble work, nor let us speak in
vain
For those too helpless to protest, too patient to
complain;
Be pitiful, be generous, to help us in our need,
And He who notes the sparrow's fall shall surely
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Will yet be greater than the wrong —
Will yet achieve my life-time vow!

Bury my weakness, oh, ye crowd
Of faithful witnesses, who stand,

Around my soul on every hand,
And tell the failure not aloud.

For I shall conquer! All begun,
The conflict rages through my life;
Yet I shall conquer in the strife,
And sing at last, a victory won!

SINGLE COMBAT

IN all the challenges which life
Holds out to us, I count it grand,
Yet half pathetic, that we stand
Or fall, unaided in the strife:

That still, unheeded and alone,
Each soul must meet its mortal foes —
With none to help or to oppose,
To mark its pæan or its moan.

What cares the world that you have met
A fierce temptation on your way,
Have fought it through the livelong day —
The issue hanging doubtful yet?

But this remains to cure the smart,
To medicine the loneliest wound —
He stands on consecrated ground
Who battles bravely, though apart:

Ground that the saints and martyrs trod,
And once — with reverence be it said —
Made sacred by the sinless tread
Of Him who was the Son of God.

TRUST

INTO the mystery of life,
Dear Lord, I cannot see ;
I only know that I exist,
Made and upheld by Thee.

The brooding presence of Thy love
Encircles me about,
Nor leaves me room for any fear,
Nor place for any doubt.

I know Thee in the cloud by day
As in the fire by night ;
Both lead me to my promised home,
The land of my delight.

The future cannot yield me proof
More tender or divine,
Than has the past, that all Thy thoughts
To meward are benign.

And backward if I look, I own
The leadings of Thy love ;

Or forward gaze, the same kind hand
Still beckons from above.

So, mercies past the pledge shall be
Of mercies yet in store ;
And present love the guarantee
Of love forevermore.

PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING

PRESS the grape, the sweet wine flows ;
Break the ground, the harvest grows ;
Crush the shell, the kernel shows.

As with nature so with man ;
Such God's universal plan
Ever since the race began.

Fallow souls no fruitage bear ;
Hearts untouched by wholesome care
Never yield the vintage rare.

Vain God's constant dew and sun ;
Still the gracious work undone —
Nay, in truth, not yet begun.

Still the soil no harvest yields ;
So the Lord his ploughshare wields,
Drives it deep through all his fields ;

Drives it deep and drives it sure ;
Ah, my soul ! canst thou endure ?
Patience ! He who wounds can cure.

Better his ploughshare than his sword ;
Nathless, can I say, “ Dear Lord,
Do according to thy word !

“ Root up every baleful thing,
Every germ of folly bring
Topmost, for its withering ? ”

Thus prepared, the heavenly seed
Planted, shall take root indeed,
Yielding harvests at our need.

Harvests, too, whose bounteous store,
Even life forevermore,
Scattered, shall enrich the poor.

“*PERFECT LOVE CASTETH OUT FEAR*”

WITH open eyes that look on God,
My daily journey I pursue :
I do not dread His lifted rod ;
Why should I fear what Love can do ?
And, if I need that He chastise,
Is He not good as He is wise ?

I know if I but follow Him

I shall be safe from harm and make —
Albeit all the way be dim —

Nor slip nor failure nor mistake ;
Or, making such, He will ordain
What seems my loss shall prove my gain.

And, though I look, to careless eyes,

A waif on pathless waters cast,
His faithful promise shall suffice

For stay and comfort to the last —
When, all my guarded wanderings o'er,
Let my safe feet but touch the shore,

And, like a child with home in sight,

I'll fall into His open arms,

Glad that I never felt affright,

Nor thought of Him as one who harms :
I, His dear child, or here, or there,
And He, my Father everywhere !

"HE GIVETH TO HIS BELOVED IN
SLEEP" ¹

LAST night a glorious vision,

No eye but mine could see,

On sleep's white, beautiful pinion

Came down from my Lord to me :

¹ Marginal translation.

I heard no song of the angels,
Only a still, small voice ;
But it glorified all the silence
And made the night rejoice.

O friend, would you know the vision
That over my pillow shone,
That out of the starry silence
Spoke to my heart alone —
The glad and glorious vision,
No eye but mine could see,
That on sleep's white, beautiful pinion
Came down from my Lord to me ?

If ever my faith grows stronger
As gloomier grows the night,
If out of the stormy darkness
I point to the coming light,
Be sure I have told the vision
No eye but mine could see,
That on sleep's white, beautiful pinion
Came down from my Lord to me.

“CONSIDER THE LILIES”

LILY fair and pure and cool,
Floating on yon miry pool,
Is the sweetness all of you ?
Has the mire from whence you grew

Naught of virtue, — building up,
Leaf by leaf, your perfect cup, —
By some strange, transmuting skill
Moulding, shaping you at will?

Certes, many a flowering shoot,
With the wholesome earth at root,
Well may envy you, my queen,
Blooming from such depths unclean.

Yet is wrought no occult spell:
Nature but disposes well
All her forces; then, she grows
Here a lily, there a rose.

One she tends with dew and sun,
Cribs in finest mould, and one
Buries 'neath the dark and slime,
Bidding each to bide its time,

Till, arrived at blossoming growth,
She is justified of both;
Since, which sweetest is, who knows, —
Or the lily or the rose?

Therefore, O ye darkened souls,
Struggling upward unto goals
Ye must reach 'gainst bitter odds,
Courage! Nature's ways are God's.

What though He withhold from you,
For a season, sun and dew?
Where you cannot understand,
Trust to his transmuting hand.

He who made the water wine
Knew this alchemy divine:
Through the paths of pain He trod,
Perfect grew the Son of God.

He is risen, laying down
Toil for triumph, cross for crown;
He is risen: soul of mine,
Courage! conquer by this sign!

LORD'S DAY

I THINK that all our days should be Lord's days,
And sacred to his service. Do we need
Church-calling bells God-ward our steps to lead,
Organs and choirs to stimulate our praise,
And well-read homilies our souls to raise
Above their week-long earthliness and greed?
Alas, what profit is it, if succeed,
To one sweet day employed in hallowed ways,
Six, spent in worldliness and sloth and pride?
Dear Sabbath, pearl of price! that we should dare
To set thee in such tinsel for the wear
Of the Great King! How shall our work abide

When He shall come like a consuming fire
And dross shall melt beneath his sacred ire?

MATIN HYMN

I LIFT the sash and gaze abroad
On the sweet earth so fair and bright;
I raise my heart to Thee, oh God,
And cry, "I thank Thee for the light!"

Beyond, the summer hills lie green,
Fringed with their wealth of waving trees,
That sparkle in the sunny sheen
And tremble in the trembling breeze.

O God, I thank Thee for each sight
Of beauty that Thy hand doth give;
For sunny skies and air and light;
Oh God, I thank Thee that I live!

That life I consecrate to Thee,
And ever, as the day is born,
On wings of joy my soul would flee
And thank Thee for another morn;

Another day in which to cast
Some silent deed of love abroad,
That, greatening as it journeys past,
May do some earnest work for God.

Another day to do, to dare ;
To tax anew my growing strength ;
To arm my soul with faith and prayer ;
And so reach heaven and Thee at length.

EVENTIDE

At cool of day, with God I walk
My garden's grateful shade ;
I hear His voice among the trees,
And I am not afraid.

I see His presence in the night, —
And, though my heart is awed,
I do not quail beneath the sight
Or nearness of my God.

He speaks to me in every wind,
He smiles from every star ;
He is not deaf to me, nor blind,
Nor absent, nor afar.

His hand, that shuts the flowers to sleep
Each in its dewy fold,
Is strong my feeble life to keep,
And competent to hold.

I cannot walk in darkness long, —
My light is by my side ;

I cannot stumble or go wrong,
 While following such a guide.

He is my stay and my defence ;—
 How shall I fail or fall ?
 My helper is Omnipotence !
 My ruler ruleth all !

The powers below and powers above,
 Are subject to His care :
 I cannot wander from His love
 Who loves me everywhere.

Thus dowered, and guarded thus, with Him
 I walk this peaceful shade ;
 I hear His voice among the trees,
 And I am not afraid.

NO NIGHT

“There shall be no night there.”— *Rev. xxi. 25.*

No night, no night ! O blessed dawn,
 When this frail body shall put on
 Immortal robes and bright renown,
 And with God's ransomed ones sit down !

No night of sorrow ! I shall be
 From every grief forever free ;

For God's own hand, with gentle sway,
Shall wipe my latest tear away.

No night of trial! Here below,
What thorns amid my roses grow!
But there, the flowers of my delight
Shall know no thorn, shall fear no blight.

No night of sin! Thrice blessed day!
How often here I go astray!
But when I reach that heavenly shore
I shall be safe, and sin no more.

No night of sickness! Here in pain
How oft I sink, then rise again;
But there, the tree of healing grows,
An antidote for all my woes.

No night of death! O cherished few
Whose hearts on earth to mine are true!
There we shall meet, and, meeting, be
From change and death forever free.

No night of tempest! Storms arise
And overcast these earthly skies;
There, all shall be serenely bright,
Nor tempests blow, nor storms affright.

No night of trouble, want or care,
No night of sadness or despair;

No night, no night, but there always
Calm, bright, serene, celestial day!

No night, no night! O blessed clime!
Fain would I leap this shoal of time,
And rest with all the ransomed band,
Within that bright, that happy land!

THE ETERNAL WISDOM

THANKS, Lord, for Thy withholding grace,
As for Thy favors granted;
Since, oft-times, what I craved, if given,
Had been what least I wanted.

And pausing at this finished round,
This cycle of my being,
My soul rejoices that its way
Is with the Great All-Seeing.

His plans are wiser far than ours,
Who sees from the beginning;
And he who doubts the gracious end
Repays the grace with sinning.

Who — glancing down his tangled life,
Its thousand tricksome phases —
But sees a purpose running through,
That all his soul amazes!

Each grief, each trial, each defeat,
Has had its end designed it;
Each sin has left its after-taste,
Its bitter cure, behind it.

And yet, O will of God, most wise! —
Who can by searching know it?
And who, by seeking to reveal,
But fails the more to show it!

We wait the shining of that day
That every cloud disperses, —
Counting, the while, our losses, gains;
Our trials, tender mercies;

And clinging, still, to God's dear hand,
In our poor human fashion;
Assured that all His ways are wise
And all His thoughts compassion.

MARTHA OR MARY?

I CANNOT choose; I should have liked so much
To sit at Jesus' feet, — to feel the touch
Of his kind, gentle hand upon my head
While drinking in the gracious words he said.

And yet to serve him! — oh, divine employ, —
To minister and give the Master joy,

To bathe in coolest springs his weary feet,
And wait upon him while he sat at meat!

Worship or service, — which? Ah, that is best
To which he calls us, be it toil or rest, —
To labor for him in life's busy stir,
Or seek his feet a silent worshipper.

So let him choose for us: we are not strong
To make the choice; perhaps we should go wrong,
Mistaking zeal for service, sinful sloth
For loving worship, — and so fail of both.

LOST AND FOUND

I HAD a treasure in my house
And woke one day to find it gone;
I mourned for it from dawn till night,
From night till dawn.

I said, "Behold, I will arise
And sweep my house," — and so I found
What I had lost, and told my joy
To all around.

I had a treasure in my heart,
And scarcely knew that it had fled,
Until communion with my Lord
Grew cold and dead.

“Behold,” I said, “I will arise
And sweep my heart of self and sin ;
For so the peace that I have lost
May enter in.”

O friends, rejoice with me ! Each day
Helps my lost treasure to restore ;
And sweet communion with my Lord
Is mine once more.

I SAID

WHEN apple blossoms in the spring
Began their fragrant leaves to shed,
And robins twittered on the wing,
“ ’T is time to sow my seeds,” I said.

So, patiently, with care and pains,
My nurslings underground I spread :
“ The early and the latter rains
Will reach them where they lie,” I said.

“ The sun will nurse them, and the dew ;
The sweet winds woo them overhead.
No care of mine shall coax them through
This black, unsightly mould,” I said.

And so I left them ; day by day,
To gentle household duties wed,

I went in quiet on my way :
 "God will take care of them," I said.

And now 't is autumn ; rich and bright
 My garden blooms — blue, white, and red ;
 A loyal show ! a regal sight !
 And all is even as I said.

My faithless heart ! the lesson heed,
 No longer walk disquieted ;
 Where the Great Sower sows the seed,
 All shall be even as He said.

'T is spring-time yet ; behold, the years
 Roll grandly in, hope-heralded,
 When thou shalt say, "Oh, graceless fears !
 Lo ! all is even as He said !"

THE LOST SHEEP

"Not willing that any should perish."

O friend of sinners, who for man once died,
 While any wanderers remain outside
 The pale of thy sweet mercy, canst thou see
 Of thy sore travail, and be satisfied ?

If but one sheep of all the guarded fold
 Is lost upon the mountain-tops, behold,

The watchful shepherd leaves the rest, to seek
The lost one ; finding it, aweary, cold,

Its trembling limbs he tenderly doth chafe,
And bears it in his bosom, warm and safe,
Back to the fold. O shepherd all divine,
Wilt thou do less for any human waif ?

Shall earthly care with heavenly care compete ?
May we not trust that all these wandering feet
Shall reach at last thy sacred fold, and bide
Forever in thy pastures large and sweet ?

SATISFIED

Not here ; my roses bear too many thorns ;
My gold has in it too much of alloy ;
The purple of my robe too oft adorns
An aching soul ; my sweets too often cloy.

Not now : the present has too much of pain —
Too much, alas, of mingled hope and fear ;
I set my loss too often 'gainst my gain ;
I shall be satisfied not now, not here.

But there ! but then ! in heaven ! when I wake
In His dear likeness who for me once died !
Oh, fount of bliss ! in thee once let me slake
My lifelong thirst — I shall be satisfied !

HYMN

[For the Bicentennial of the First Congregational Church, Marblehead, August 13, 1884.]

THE changing centuries, O God,
Fulfil thy perfect thought :
The ancient paths the fathers trod
Are widening into highways broad
Because thy hand has wrought.

Our sires adored and worshipped thee,
Yet feared beneath thy rod ;
And if with clearer eyes we see
Thy judgments with thy grace agree,
We bless thee, O our God.

They saw thee in the cloud and flame ;
We see thee in the sun.
Thanks for the years, that aye proclaim
Thy justice and thy love the same,
And joy and duty one.

Dear Father, kind when most severe,
Most loving when most just :
To lead us through each changing year,
In pastures wide, by waters clear,
Thy guiding hand we trust.

THE RETREAT¹

A REFUGE for life's burdened ones,
A beautiful and calm retreat,
Where toil may fold her weary hands
And labor ease her aching feet.

Oh, noble purpose — born of grief
And loss — that planned this place of rest !
That wrought through patient years, till now
Its glad fulfilment stands confessed !

Dear Lord, accept the gift, and make
This Home the fair abode of peace,
Where loving ministries shall dwell
And care and toil find glad surcease.

Here may the burdened seek repose,
The sad take heart again, and here
May joyless childhood wake once more
Its happy laugh of careless cheer.

So shall this blessèd influence flow,
An ever-widening sea of love ;
Source of unnumbered joys below,
And type of sweeter joys above.

¹ Written for the dedication, May 31, 1888, of "Rosemary Cottage," Eliot, Me., a summer retreat for poor children and tired women, founded by Mrs. Moses G. Farmer.

IN WAR TIME

I WANDERED in unquiet mood
Beneath the stars : " Oh, Solitude
And Night," I murmured, " ye are good !

" The day with ceaseless din is rife ;
There is no room in this vexed life
For anything but noise and strife.

" When will the dreadful carnage cease,
And the sweet Sabbath dawn of Peace
Rise on the nation and increase ?

" Oh, blessed Freedom ! haste the day !
For only 'neath thy perfect sway
These horrors shall be rolled away."

I looked up to the thronging stars ;
Above, the flaming planet, Mars,
Struggled and plunged through cloudy bars.

Great drifts of misty shadow lay
Like spectral ghouls athwart his way,
Sullen and wrathful, cold and gray.

And while I gazed, his fiery light
Grew quenched and dim, then vanished quite ;
My soul leaped upward at the sight !

“Thus perish from the earth,” I said,
“Thy baleful influence, carnage-wed
And born of blood, thou planet red !”

Exulting, to the north I turned
Impetuous — for my spirit burned
To see the happy sign confirmed.

There, keeping her inviolate tryst,
Calm, undisturbed by any mist,
Clear-shining as an amethyst,

By no avenging cloud-gnomes driven,
The sacred star to Freedom given
Smiled on me from the tranquil heaven.

And if I took it for a sign,
The pointing of a Hand Divine,
The impulse was not wholly mine.

It calmed me to a better mood ;
No more I said, “ Oh, Solitude
And Darkness, ye alone are good ! ”

I blessed the day for what it brought
Of truth and valor, battle-wrought ;
The hearts that dared, the hands that fought.

But most I blessed the gracious Power
That guards the issues of the hour
And waits to crown it with His dower ;

Peace, born of Freedom! priceless boon!
Sweet keynote to a song shall soon
Set a discordant world in tune!

THE WILL FOR THE DEED

No sword have I, no battle-blade,
Nor shining spear; how shall I aid
My country in her great crusade?

I cannot sow with gold the sod,
Like Dragon's teeth, and from the clod
See armed men rise, battle-shod.

I may not stand in mart or hall
And shout aloud great Freedom's call,
"Come to the rescue, one and all!"

I am a woman, weak and slight,
No voice to plead, no arm to fight,
Yet burning to support the right.

How shall I aid my country's cause?
How help avenge her trampled laws?
Alas, my woman's heart makes pause.

With oil and wine I may not go
Where wounded men toss to and fro,
Beneath the invader's hand laid low.

My little child looks up to me
And lisps a stronger, mightier plea ;
God wills where he is I should be.

Ah well, I am not needed ! He
Who knows my heart, perchance, for me
Has other work than now I see.

“They also serve who stand and wait.”
Oh, golden words ! and not too late,
My soul accepts her humbler fate.

Content to serve in any way,
Less than the least, if so I may
But hail the dawning of that day,

When my beloved land shall rise,
And shout as one man to the skies,
“Lo, Freedom lives and Slavery dies !”

AFTER A VICTORY

THERE is no need, sweet moon ! the night
With other splendor is bedight,
The dizen'd panes are all alight

With taper-gleams ; and on the air,
Commingle'd with the rocket's glare,
A thousand torchlights flash and flare.

'T is late ; but still, adown the street,
So gay with flags, I hear the beat
Of quick, exulting, restless feet ;

And, over all, incessant swells
The jangle of the village bells,
And cannon booming o'er the dells ;

For tidings thrilled us yesternight
Of a brave victory ; how the fight
Was fearful, but God helped the right.

“The fight was fearful.” Oh ! the pain
And grief and loss against the gain ;
The joy of triumph, and its bane !

O friends ! dear friends ! my pulses leap
Loyal as yours ; yet I could weep
Above this pageant that we keep.

Bear with me ; but my heart is sore
For our dead heroes ; score on score
Shall see God's sweet light nevermore.

They loved like us : the belts they drew
Close for the fight zoned hearts as true
And warm as beat in me and you.

Their babes, like ours, were rosy-fair ;
Had eyes as blue, as silky hair ;
Their mother's hair and eyes, — ah, there

You touch the tender spot! pause, men!
 Go home to wife and child, — and then,
 If ye have heart to, shout again.

Ah well! God send the night come soon
 When these mad bells another tune
 Shall clamor to the listening moon;

When lights in every pane shall gleam,
 And torches flash and rockets stream,
 Responsive to the bells' glad theme, —

Freedom and peace: Great Power above!
 Mate thou this eagle with this dove, —
 The rule of right, the rule of love;

And bid their married wings brood o'er
 This bleeding land of ours, — once more
 At one, and free from shore to shore!

POEM FOR DECORATION DAY

ONCE more the changing seasons bring
 The lovely miracle of spring:
 The streams their cheery songs renew,
 The skies take on a deeper blue;
 A spicy scent the air pervades,
 From blossoming boughs and ferny glades;
 The sweet days lengthen unaware,

The shortened nights grow warm and fair ;
The woods their robe of russet brown
Take off, and don a gayer gown ;
The fields, to be as fine as they,
Set all their subtle looms at play,
And weave, unceasing, though unseen,
Their great rich carpets, broad and green, —
Designing deftly, here and there,
Flower-patterns, pale, but passing fair,
Counting on June's delicious skies
To warm them into deeper dyes ;
Blithe robins pour delirious notes
Of welcome from their crimson throats ;
The bluebird scarce can build his nest
For the deep rapture at his breast,
And pauses in his work, to sing
This lovely miracle of spring.

Oh, meet it is, dear friends, that we
Should join this jocund company ;
And — though we cannot quite be gay —
Put on our singing robes to-day :
Sing of the spirit's light and bloom,
Sing how the Power that bursts the tomb
Of nature, keepeth watch above
The sepulchre of those we love.
For they are risen ; they are not here :
These graves, with each returning year,
Ye deck with flowers, — but where are they
Whose souls once habited the clay

That sleeps beneath? Thou knowest where,
 Dear Lord; thou hast them still in care :
 The sparrow shall not fall without
 Our Father, and we will not doubt.
 Yet still we love, as spring returns,
 To gather round these sacred urns ;
 To come with brimful hands, and pour,
 From Nature's fast reviving store
 Of bud and bloom, our grateful gift, —
 White lilies, and the pink-white drift
 Of apple-blossoms, purple plumes
 Of lilacs, sweet syringa blooms ;
 Gay crocus-flowers and daffodils,
 And columbines from breezy hills :
 Searching the wood for flowery signs,
 We rifle it of half its vines,
 Pluck sweet arbutus, nor forget,
 Withal, the blue-eyed violet.
 No flower too lowly, none too rare
 For tribute ; love delights to spare, —
 Counting its costliest service small
 To theirs who, dying, gave up all !
 O, if there be, above the rest,
 One spot by grateful footsteps pressed,
 One place where love and light and bloom
 Should rise triumphant over gloom
 And doubt and hate, 't is where they lie
 Who dared, for duty's sake to die !
 Let nothing dark nor fearsome tread
 These haunts of our heroic dead,

But light and joy and peace instead.
Thrice hallowed spot! There let the spring
Bestow its earliest blossoming ;
There let the singing robins come,
And sparrows chirp, and insects hum ;
And squirrels from the nutty wood
People the peaceful solitude,
And crickets sing among the grass,
And troops of happy children pass :
There friendships go, to plant the spot
With heart's-ease and forget-me-not ;
And new-made lovers, passion-mad,
Frequent the place and make it glad
With shy half-glances as they walk,
Sweet nothings and bewildered talk ;
And mother lead her little child,
In search of blossoms, nature-wild ;
And all sweet care of man and God
Plant flowers above the hallowed sod.

Yet one more word, — heaven speed the day
When wars from earth shall pass away,
When principles more dear than life
Shall triumph — but through love, not strife,
And men shall own another might
Than bloodshed, in defence of right :
A day more hallowed even than this, —
When righteousness and peace shall kiss ;
And, in her quiet citadel,
Mercy with truth delight to dwell ;

When, in our Rama-homes, no sound
Of lamentation shall be found,
Henceforth, above our slaughtered ones, —
Sad Rachels weeping for their sons, —
But, in the stead thereof, shall rise,
Reëchoing to the farthest skies,
Hosannas over war's surcease,
Praises for love's divine increase,
And pæans in the name of peace!

FLOWERS FOR OUR DEAD

“FLOWERS for our dead!” — and at the word
As by a mandate from the Lord,
The green earth blossomed; far and wide
Hill, valley, to the call replied.

Flowers for our dead! Oh! lovely things!
God fashioned all your painted wings,
And gemmed your starry eyes with dew,
And gave you robes, red, white and blue.

And here, beneath his sky, we stand,
And take you from his gracious hand —
Passing around with reverent tread
To scatter you above our dead.

Oh, flowers! lie here, and breathe away
Your unspent lives above this clay;

'T was thus exhaled their nobler powers
Whose types ye are, unselfish flowers!

For thus they died — before their time —
In youth's glad bloom, in manhood's prime;
Yielding their lives up, one and all,
Obedient to a nation's call,

As ye do now! Oh, frail, sweet things,
How pure a fragrance round you clings!
So round the memory of our dead
How pure, how sweet the fragrance shed!

PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S GRAVE

LAY his dear ashes where ye will, —
On southern slope or western hill;
And build above his sacred name
Your proudest monuments of fame;
Yet still his grave our hearts shall be;
His monument, a people free!

Sing sweet, sing low;
We loved him so!

His grave a nation's heart shall be;
His monument, a people free!

Wave, prairie winds! above his sleep
Your mournful dirges, long and deep;
Proud marble! o'er his virtues raise

The tribute of your glittering praise ;
Yet still his grave our hearts shall be,
His monument, a people free !
 Sing sweet, sing low ;
 We loved him so !
His grave a nation's heart shall be ;
His monument, a people free !

So just, so merciful, so wise,
Ye well may shrine him where he lies ;
So simply good, so great the while,
Ye well may raise the marble pile ;
Yet still his grave our hearts shall be,
His monument, a people free !
 Sing sweet, sing low ;
 We loved him so !
His grave a nation's heart shall be,
His monument, a people free !

CHARLES SUMNER

THE friend of truth, of right, of man,
His human sympathy o'erran
The common limit, to embrace
Within its bounds the human race.
 He felt God's kinship coursing through
 His own pure veins, and straightway knew
 All men his kin, of every hue.

He knew no schism, sect, or clan,
 His love to God was love to man;
 His creed, purged clean of human lies,
 This: "Mercy, and not sacrifice."

Ah, bigot! ask no more if he
 Were sound in faith; go thou and be
 As sound in thy humanity.

CHANNING

O STRONG iconoclast! whence came
 Your Titan stroke?
 Whence, leaping from your lips of flame,
 The words you spoke?

What impulse fired you, that you trod,
 Alone, the field,
 And in the sight of man and God
 Reversed the shield, —

The dreadful shield of injured law, —
 Till, in the place
 Of wrath and doom, the people saw
 A Father's face?

O Channing! years have had no power
 That sight to dim:
 Our eyes, new-opened from that hour,
 Still turn to Him, —

Our Father, — full of grace and truth,
And veiled no more
In creeds unholy and uncouth
Like those of yore.

So truth shall live ; so error die.
Iconoclast !
The gods you shivered crumbling lie !
Your labors last !

TO CHARLES SUMNER ¹

WE thank thee, Sumner ! Thou hast spoken the
word

God gave to thy safe keeping : thou hast set
Life, death, before the nation ; thou hast hurled
Thy single pebble, plucked from truth's pure
stream,

Into the forehead of a giant wrong,
And it doth reel and tremble. Men may doubt,
But the keen sword of right shall finish well
Thy brave beginning.

Courage, then, true soul !
Not vainly hast thou spoken ; angels heard,
And shook from their glad harps a gush of joy

¹ In recognition of his speech, "Emancipation our Best Weapon," before the Republican State Convention at Worcester, October 1, 1831 ; published in "The Independent," and inserted as "a tribute which has merit of its own" in the Appendix to the Speech, vol. vi. of his "Works."

That the one word was uttered in men's ears,
 The "Open Sesame" by which alone
 True freedom and true peace might enter in,
 Making earth like to heaven.

Then bide thy time.

What thou hast spoken as 't were in the ear
 Shall be proclaimed on housetops. God locks up
 In His safe garners every seed of truth,
 Until the time shall come to cast it forth,
 Saying, "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill
 The broad earth, till it shouts its harvest-home."
 His purposes are sure; who works with Him
 Need fear no failure. By my hopes of heaven,
 I'd rather speak one word for truth and right,
 That God shall have and treasure up for use
 In working out His purposes of good,
 Than clutch the title-deed that should insure
 A kingdom to my keeping! so, in faith,
 I speak my simple word, and, fearing not,
 Commit it to His hands whom I do serve.

And thus it is, O friend, that I have dared
 To send thee greeting and this word of cheer:
 God bless thee, Sumner, and all souls like thine,
 Working serene and patient in His cause!
 God give thee of the fruit of thine own hands,
 And let thine own works praise thee in the gates
 Of the new city, whose foundation-stones
 Thy hands are laying, though men see it not!

THE LIBRARY

[From the Ode read at the dedication of "The Wallace Library and Art Building," Fitchburg.]

AH, what a treasury of wisdom lies
In a good book! and who would not be wise?
What founts of sweetness and of strength well
up

From its deep heart! who would not quaff the
cup?

The bees must know where honey-dews abound;
Oh, for a human instinct as profound!
The birds must fathom where the south land
lies;

Oh, for an intuition half as wise!
For what are intuitions, but the soul's
Blind reachings after its supremest goals;
Divining helps whereby it may essay
A stronger sweep along its upward way;
Seeking in glad, yet reverential mood,
All gentle friendships with the wise and good
Of every nation, age: and, look around!
Shall not such helps, such friendships here be
found?

O sages, poets, who shall fill this place
With lavish store of wisdom, sweetness, grace!
Here we may pay our homage and grow wise
And glad beneath your helpful ministries.
Here we may offer the allegiance meet

To blind old Homer, sit at Milton's feet ;
And learn of both, as fails the outward sight,
To trim anew the spirit's inner light :
May sing with Chaucer, walk in faërie land
With sweet-lipped Spenser ; taking Dante's hand,
Explore the dark abysses where, denied
All hope of exit, hapless souls abide ;
May summon Shakespeare — in himself a host —
King Lear and sweet Ophelia, Hamlet's ghost,
Sad Desdemona, Egypt's peerless queen,
Coming and going on the shifting scene ;
Commune with Cowper, walk afield with Burns,
And listen to him as he sings by turns,
Of luckless Tam O'Shanter and his mare,
Sweet Highland Mary and the Brigs of Ayr ;
Or coming down to later times, rehearse
With Tennyson his grand, immortal verse ;
Talk with dogmatic, scholarly Carlyle,
Uncouth, but grimly honest all the while ;
Abide with our own Emerson, or go
A-wooing after nature with Thoreau ;
Though, for that matter, all the poets woo
The gentle nymph, — and our immortal few,
Our Whittier, and Longfellow, and Holmes,
Bryant and Lowell, — whosoever roams
With either, sees fair nature with new eyes,
And life with larger possibilities.

FITCHBURG

NESTED among her hills she lies, —
The city of our love !
Within her pleasant homes arise ;
And healthful airs and happy skies
Float peacefully above.

A sturdy few, 'mid hopes and fears,
Her fair foundations set :
And looking backward now, through years
Of steady gain, how small appears
Her old estate ! and yet,

She dons no autocratic airs,
In scorn of humbler days,
But shapes her fortunes and affairs,
To match the civic wreath she wears
And justify her bays.

Honor and truth her old renown :
Conservative of both,
The virtues of the little town
She holds in legacy, to crown
The city's larger growth.

Nor ease nor sloth her strength despoil :
Her peaceful farmers till,
With patient thrift, th' outlying soil,

Her trained mechanics deftly toil,
Her merchants ply their skill ;

Her ponderous engineries supply
A thousand waiting needs ;
Her wheels revolve, her shuttles fly, —
And ever where the prize hangs high,
Her foot, unfaltering, leads.

Her sympathies are large and sweet :
And when, at freedom's call,
The war flags waved, the war drums beat,
She sprang, responsive, to her feet,
And freely offered all !

Alert in war, she emulates
The arts of peace, as well :
Religion, order, guard her gates ;
Wealth, culture, thrift, like happy Fates,
Her destinies foretell.

So, through the round of years, she keeps,
Advancing on her past :
Her old-time vigor never sleeps, —
And even as she sows, she reaps ;
God bless her to the last !

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